

# RUMINATIONS

BY

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## NOTE

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The Author





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## THE STARERS

ONE of the maxims imprinted on our childhood is that we are not to stare. Why we should repress this habit is not, perhaps, at all clear to us at the time. For we are only carrying on, in the quietest and most soundless way, our essential task of watching and learning to know the world. In this case our lens is focussed instinctively upon objects which will be more important to us in life than any others. It is focussed on People. We are taking in their looks and ways with a wise passiveness, like that which Wordsworth commended as a source of true knowledge. If they are so inscrutable, absurd or dreadfully fascinating that we watch them as if looking at a play, it is surely no fault of ours. Nay, our rapt attention is a flattery, and at the same time a perfectly unsophisticated outcrop of nature. One can hardly object to the staring of a child any more than one objects to the staring of a cow.

In fact, the ban upon it is a mystery belonging to that adult world whose very mysteriousness provokes our staring. To understand it properly, we should have to be in the play ourselves, as we shall be afterwards. Like many natural things, the habit is repressed because it is inconvenient, or—

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more exactly—because it will be. We are visited not with the sins of our forefathers but with our possible future solecisms. What is an innocence in us now will be a crime one day. Why this should be so we could not possibly understand at the time, and indeed even an adult's thinking finds it hard to explain why progress should always involve the loss of something.

But staring is not quite like crying for one's food or fighting for someone else's toys; it is never quite eradicated. It may be abridged, concentrated, refined—the act of intuition being perhaps only the compression of a stare into a look—but no one can ever be sure of not reverting to it.

As if to show, indeed, that it is conditionally allowed by society, there are places licensed for staring. Watch the people sitting on chairs in the Park, or the concourse round the bandstand of any promenade, English or foreign. They can stare, freely and frankly, for enjoyment; and none gainsays their opportunity. There will probably be a theorist to say that they are exercising a really social function. Then we are urgently tempted in a railway-carriage. It is almost a prime need to scan the faces of those who are confined with us for a possibly long journey, and the confinement itself reduces us to something like the helplessness of children. But it must be done furtively; staring is very nearly licensed in a train, but not quite; for the room is small and you feel the personality

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and might feel the resentment of your unknown neighbours. Hotels, one might say, are half-licensed places, being more compressed than the park, and less chastening than a railway-carriage. Your relation to the other visitors is odd and ambiguous, for you don't know them, and yet you can't help knowing them marvellously well by sight—and that very word is significant. You may wish to know them by acquaintance, but this again has probably meant a good deal of preliminary looking.

In fact, on such debatable ground one sees many phases of the lurking habit—sees how it is enjoyed or profaned, becomes discreetly subtilized, strays into insolence, or relapses absent-mindedly into simple childhood. But to find it in a quite unsophisticated ferocity is rare, for hotels are sophisticated. The one memorable case I have seen happened in an unpretentious Italian hostelry which was really a good old-fashioned inn, although from its size and its large frequentation by summer visitors it might be called—as it called itself—by the higher-sounding name. The scene was its long summer dining-room or “veranda,” one of those human conservatories which can be all glass or all air. The moment was just after the fifteenth of July, when Italians begin streaming to the mountains and every motor-omnibus takes the road. Coming into the room rather late, I was aware of a fresh party at the opposite table, who seemed themselves much more aware of me. They con-

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sisted of a man, two boys, and two women, one middle-aged and one older, in white blouses and black skirts. They were of the middle class or rather the distinctly lowest middle, perhaps suddenly, but not extravagantly enriched. The man had his back to me and the children were tolerably occupied, but the women fixed me with a scrutiny which had the power of a hundred eyes. It was not exactly the sheer Italian gaze, nor the relentless stare of the peasant, though no doubt they were contributing elements. But the potent essence must have belonged to the natures of the two women. Both had sharp and restless faces, but under the cross-fire of their eyes I felt—felt more than saw, for these were not looks that one could challenge—it was the older woman who had a really destructive gaze. It bored into me like a gimlet; while she ate I waited for it like the ping of a mosquito, and wondered if dinner could be survived.

Yet all this hardly lasted beyond the soup, and then I was released; for three strangers appeared at the next table who were really worth inspection. They were Austrians or possibly Germans on a walking-tour—not Teutons of the comic, portly type, but attractive, quiet-mannered, “gentle.” However, they had dressed for their holiday in the national manner. One of them wore the traditional grey sporting jacket faced with green, another a Tyrolean coat with its little chequer-pattern of blue and black. The third was a youth, who by

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his place at the table was the most exposed to scrutiny. He had nothing more remarkable to begin with than a sleeved waistcoat; but below this came a pair of leathern "shorts," embroidered and laced up at the seam in the best manner; then an interval showing his bare brown knees, and then, after curt grey stockings which left off before the ankle, another interval of bare tanned skin above his shoes. The appearance of the whole party glazed the women from the first. I doubt if they had been in an hotel before; certainly they had never seen anything like these Austrians. As they were no longer looking at me, I could look at them, and it was towards the elder woman that my glances wandered. Having, as it were, devoured the coats of the men, her gaze was now fixed on the youth, and when he left the table to fetch a newspaper I foresaw that it must concentrate on his ankles. It was so. Although he did not show it, I fancied he must be having a sharp local sensation. And I felt as if he were in the Zoo, among predacious animals. Only there was a reversal of the usual positions, the young man and the rest of us being morally caged, while the woman was as a tigress set free to roam and decide whom she would rather mangle.

This stare, in fact, was *sui generis*, carnivorous. When the man in the Italian party turned round and looked witheringly at the Austrians, it was something quite different. That was the contempt of ignorance and class, a thing one might meet with

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anywhere, though it abounded particularly among the Italians. It is a gesture conveyed in its fulness not by mere looking, but by wheeling round one's chair to look. And again the woman's gaze was not the same as a peasant's. The rustic stare swings between the extremes of profoundness and vacancy. For you may still find it vacuous, brutish to the point of being imbecile; but if I compared this woman with the brutes it was for another reason. She was evidently a grasper, whereas that empty kind of gaze takes in nothing, one would think, to feed its emptiness.

The peasant's stare has its other abysm, an inscrutable deepness. It surveys you out of some far distance and tacitly judges. Magnified with age, it is perfected in the eyes of some old crone, and one sees it in Latin and Celtic countries more often than in ours, no doubt because experience has been taken and rendered there more naturally. It is not chilling or freezing like the aristocratic stare, being really outside the measurements of temperature. But nothing else is so withering. For it is at once remotely alien and pitilessly near, and seems to know you not only in the make of your clothes but through all the concealments of your being. This sort of look outdoes the supercilious stare because it is completely un-selfconscious in the act of looking. The peasant's gaze seems to rise out of the bare essential bones of life—unchangeable foundations—so that when you meet the long look you feel like a fluttering



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wisp of thistledown. You can meet it because it does not pester like some others, but having pierced your defences it is only endurable for about a second. Hastily you wrap the folds of respectability about you, remind yourself that the rustic's view is a terribly narrow one, that very likely he was thinking of something else all the time—but you have been vanquished.

In its last intenseness, a face of this kind wants nothing. It certainly does not want to be you; you have been only as an object passing. The faces of the women at the inn were unsatisfied and wanted a great deal, and that is why they looked voracious. All the same, I believe the elder woman, if not a peasant herself, must have got from rustic peasants a large dose of the original unconquerable gaze, and this she had sharpened into a strange virulence. For it was more than inquisitive, being malignant and perhaps envious, though it might have been hard to say precisely what she envied. Not the people on whom her eyes were fixed, but perhaps something in their use of the place, something—or everything—which the hotel atmosphere suggested and she had not got.

Thinking of the look in the faces of these women, of the absorbed and absorbing gaze of children, the stare of a vacant rustic, and the attentive gaze of a faithful and affectionate dog, one is moved to believe that staring is always the sign of an inferiority—not so much an inferiority of manners as an incompleteness which knows

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itself to be incomplete, and is trying to take in what it requires. And this may hold, perhaps, for these various cases in diverse ways; but the gaze of the sure-eyed old rustic is a contradiction. And so are the looks even of some domestic animals; the cow, one might say, and certainly the cat. For the cat is as much an independent in this scale as the dog is an inferior. Not that I would libel dogs, but they are admittedly the servants of their masters and reveal this consciousness in their eyes, while a cat's stare is the embodied spirit of detachment. Through and through you it goes, like the relentless gaze of the old peasant: a look which it resembles, indeed, more than any other human thing. But while this may cause you to reflect, it does not wither. It begins and ends in its own mystery. The cat's stare travels beyond you, or rather it was from the first in its own world, so alien as not to be irritant to yours. And a reflective owner of the cat enjoys this silent intersection of two worlds; it is more of a pleasure than a challenge.

Then—to return to the humans—there is the look, not always so obtrusive as to be called a stare, which implies a social mastery. I remember an impression of this kind in another hotel: the vision of someone pausing, between two mouthfuls of soup, to take in with an incisive glance the arrival of a stranger at a table down the room in front of him. The new guest was a father coming to join his already installed family, who

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were attractive but perplexing; he was the missing clue on which we had speculated. With that look, which was as interesting as the object of it, he was investigated, known and classed. It was so short that to call it a stare might be miscalling it, and yet it was long of its kind and concentrated. There was no question of envy here, and no hint of the supercilious. It was just a case, somehow intense enough to be remembered, of swift registering, of an expert control by the observer, who happened to be a man of parts as well as a "personage."

And so perhaps nothing is left but for us, too, to register the extreme variety of stares. Abridge them as you may, there remains at least this duality of superior and inferior; and just as love and hate can appear suddenly and inexplicably alike in their manifestations, so it is with these extremes. Concerning the person stared at there may be possibly a law. He must be invested for the moment with the quality of strangeness. That is the primitive flavour which we snatch whenever we can. As people grow in social sophistication, adopting the monocle and lorgnon, their staring grows more conscious and puts on a higher impertinence. It then may appear to be a tool of social castigation, or even to have arisen in that way, as Bergson so oddly thought about laughter. This in itself will hardly console the stared-at. Indeed, what you should do when so assailed is always a problem. There are times (very rarely) for

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taking up the challenge, and times for ignoring or repentance. But one consolation may be always with you. Wearisomely familiar as you are to yourself, strongly as you may suspect yourself of boring your friends, here is someone whose very gaze declares that you are a creature rich and strange to him.

Being imperfectly cured of the habit, I should like to think I was always moved by a sincere passion for this strangeness. But the pleasure must be discreetly indulged, and it must be its own reward; it does not *pay*. After the first moment, humanly speaking, there is little of importance to be learned simply by the eye. This, as was said by a poet already quoted, is the most despotic sense, even to the point of laying all the other faculties asleep. Helpless is anyone who lets his gaze be fixed on the person with whom he is talking. He has relapsed into the position of the child, without a child's intuitiveness; and he may become as a rabbit under the serpent's eye. I know nothing certain as to the superiority with which the blind are credited in personal divinations, but I can believe it. Abstract the visible, and not only thought but a mental intuition of what is in the other mind comes into play.

Indeed, even at its most seemingly offensive moments, there is a pathos in the stare. No other human gesture hints quite so plainly at the distance which separates one person from another, or tries more absorbedly to span it. "We mortal

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millions live *alone*." That is the confession which finally, as it were, stares out of the stare. It may not be the ultimate fact about human life, and blessedly it is not the only one. Still, it is one of the facts. When it comes into mind, I find myself thinking sympathetically even of the woman at the inn.

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C o w s , even for the majority of those who like them, are probably an acquired taste; and there are doubtless still larger numbers of human beings who never acquire it. As they are the givers of our earliest and most natural food, and might be called our universal foster-mothers, this may seem strange. But not even the smell of milk new-foaming in the pails or still immanent in the fragrant creatures themselves as they stalk down the lane, although it is the most soothing and recreating of country odours, and must persuade anyone to a momentary delight, at least, in cows, will ensure a permanent fondness for them. In fact, many people, having been surfeited with milk in their tender years, may not care to pursue that association any farther. Even the child who thanks the cow in Stevenson's pleasant verses for giving him cream to eat with apple tart, must be suspected of repeating a lesson from his elders.

One may have hostile impressions. How many have had their minds perverted from the first by the foolish fancies of nursemaids! Even country-bred girls, oddly enough, are not proof against these trepidations. Doubtless it is not the cows, but the fearsome latency of a bull which is alarm-

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ing. But the effect is the same; the cows, most benignant of females, are tainted with the repute of the other sex and libelled with apprehensions. They are already slightly formidable to a child, or at least enigmatic, because of their size, their horns, and their slowness. Also, harmless as they may be, they can not only look perfectly blank, but decidedly angry; impersonating at these times the cross and worried female. So, one way or another, a passage through the meadow becomes a heart-shaking adventure.

Moreover, unless we have the freedom of a farm, we know them only as a species. Not so do we know dogs or cats—so far as we really know the latter. We begin to know dogs with the character and name of the first who is an intimate acquaintance; in essentials he is a person like the rest of the family, and so all later dogs are potentially individuals. And so with cats after their kind; the first kitten we sported with, the first cat whose long-suffering we presumed on, shed a glow of personality over their race for ever. But cows, though they are individualized by their markings and (in the intimacy of the farm) their tempers, seem to recede by contrast into an ovine indistinctness. Certainly they can be old friends and the mainstays of a home; but never partners in adventure like a horse, nor so near to our bed as dogs or cats. I once knew a village in the north where the postmistress, a little doited, was reported to keep a cow in her parlour. As no one

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ever crossed that threshold the story could not be proved or disproved, but the size and desultory habits of the animal leave it scarcely thinkable.

Out of the mists of first acquaintance, cows loom up as a lumbering and yet strangely living furniture of the fields. It takes longer to walk round one than round a cupboard; and they look at you, with a dubious thought of movement. Their rhythm is out of time with childhood's paces; they are so bulky, so sedentary. Even a calf has not the frolic daintiness of a kid, nor the winning absurdity of a lamb, nor the wild free look that a young colt's eyes have. And the incumbence of destiny has settled on their mothers. Faced with a human child, one might suppose them to have sensations very like those of certain adult humans. They have every wish to be kind and behave as appropriately as possible, but they really do not know what is to be done about it.

And so, one way or other, the true appreciation of cows is withheld from babes and reserved for our maturity. As we grow to ripeness and reflectiveness it also grows—if we have a mind to let it. The beauty of nature steals upon us through the beauty of the country, and this "glory of the divine country" is not separable from the quietest and homeliest things in it. We cease regarding cows as mere objects of use or furniture. One sees them grazing wide in open pastures; motionless, except for their flickering tails, in pools, under the chequering of shade and sunlight; crawling back



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in the evening down the lane—and who would do without them?

They cease to be monotonously shy or stolid. Go into the west country and watch—a sure sign that you are there—a troop of Herefords advancing up the green of a meadow. These are Amazons compared to the short-horns. With their broad brows and chests, their ruddy coats and white facings, they are like some forgotten British soldiery, like Wellington's. Being British, they look fiercer than they are, but their build is redoubtable. It is clearly right that they should have beef-producing qualities.

The black and white coats of Holsteins, total in their contrast to this, are no doubt as apt to the Low Countries as our reddish animal to English pastures. At home, they rather enhance the flat spaces and at the same time suggest trim house-interiors. Living once close to a herd of them that had been imported into England, I found their sober hues a delight at first and even a relief from the prevailing tint of English cows, which vies, as it were, with the brilliance of the grass and is the complement of it, but can be staring. But after a little this was just the emphasis one missed, and I thirsted for the sight of a reddish cow, or a simultaneous vision of the two species.

For the visible charm and beauty of cows lies in their variety. Even the liquid, humanly gentle eyes and soft fawn coats of Jerseys may pall if you see them and no others. Probably this is no mere

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whim of optics or æsthetics. It is because even in so tamed a creature as the cow one likes a hint of wildness. Sometimes, in the mountains, all these feelings can be gratified, as one passes from an Alpine valley, grazed only by the milder sort, on to uplands where the cows rove in the open and are of a rich diversity. Then it is a joy to watch the evening processions of returning cattle, strung out in all their colours—black or red, edged with white along back and legs, white with jet-black ears and eyes and muzzle, white pure all over, fawns dark, light and dappled, and the wonderful deep blue-grey. And still more a joy to behold them sprinkled on the hills and giving at least the illusion of freedom, even the tinkling bells seeming more like a tribal convenience of their own than a device of human ownership. Somewhere, even so, will be the inevitable herd-boy; and more gaunt and weather-marked, the old cow-woman from the nearest village. Instead of reclining or running about like the herd-boy she will stand witch-like, leaning on her stick, and presently beat the creatures home with it. But the racy, invigorating sense of cows and hills is not banished by those watchers, and sometimes they will quicken it.

I had walked once, under a grey sky and a wind with snow in it, up the long back of a hill which one could have fancied was an English down, but for rocky peaks standing up in the distance; and in a wide shallow dip on the top I came suddenly

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on a herd of cattle, so many-coloured that they looked as if they had gathered there for the mere variety; a herdsman and two boys stood round the circle watching. The dappled beasts were vivid on the greyness, but there was nothing to be heard except the wind. And whether because of all this handsome life so clustered there, or of the openness of the place and the fixity of the watchers, whose cloaks and patches had the tint of the ground, it seemed as though the intentness of all three of them were needed to prevent the cows from running wild. That was not so very far from a village. Higher up, among stony wastes where one hardly expects to find a goat, there are still a few cattle sometimes, munching improbable pasture among the rocks and watering at a cliff-shadowed tarn. It is queer to drop on them among the stones, and if you hear them before you see them the effect is startling; for a bull's blare or the lowing of a cow gets such a ringing depth from the cliffs that it bellows like the thunder of a lion.

Cows in general have been subdued into such faithful bond-slaves that their attraction seems a domestic charm, bound up with the life of farms and the routine of the country. Yet it is with them as with all animals; they must be detached a little to be appreciated. And this is really a question of seeing them alone rather than imagining them in a primitiveness they have lost, although it may be genial to think that the wild cattle of Chillingham, wholly unconscious of the time and place they live

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in, still hide their calves and suckle them secretly. Indeed, those pale white creatures, ghost-like amid the brakes, would be probably more afraid of you than you could be of them. But these are rarities. We must take cows as we find them or have made them, and no agitation ruffles the highest of their graces—their contemplativeness. It enjoys and spreads tranquillity. For this attitude is broad and quiet as the English meadows where you relish it, with no interruptions from a herd-boy.

The longer and lonelier, the better. One afternoon I was on the grassy bluff of Shaston, to name it by the old name which abides on the millstones, and in the books of Thomas Hardy. The town was packed away out of sight behind; there was only the wide view of vale and hills and counties, the hill-top and its dropping shoulder. A deep draught of that view, and slumber; and then again a consciousness of objects. When this came back to me I was encircled by recumbent cows, which had soundlessly posted themselves round. Too unconcerned to stare, they turned only a glance at me now and then. Their gaze ranged out over undulating miles of distance. And the immense view was somehow actualized and brought nearer by the creatures strewn round on the hill like so many boulders, only with a warm, rich and breathing life within them. I ceased thinking of the view and lay there for an hour or so merely for the pleasure of being among these large reposeful animals. Like Virgil's sheep, they did not

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repent of the human being in their midst, nor did I repent of them. When I went away presently, it was with a feeling that something had happened besides the enjoyment of the place. And the feeling defined itself; I had been with the cows. Their composure had entered into me, sweeping me by contagion, as it were, into a different rhythm of existence, profound and slow-moving.

For the first time, also, I seemed to grasp the inner being of the creatures. This long meditateness is surely their essential virtue. I know that anyone with an economical mind will say this is an illusion. It results merely from their having an alimentary canal of a singular kind, and four stomachs. While they seem to contemplate, they ruminate; and rumination, from the humanly physical point of view, is a process almost disgusting. Their look, certainly, may be only a mask; or, if you prefer, a beacon to warn us how much that passes for meditateness is really sensational, or sensual, enjoyment. But I do not believe that if you look into a cow's eyes you will receive this as the whole conclusion of the matter. The life they nourish in the brain, is, by human ratios, a blind one; they may have nothing that can actually be called thoughts (no more had I on the hill-top); but I should doubt if that abstracted look of theirs is crossed by so many self-regarding visions as a dog's or cat's. Less personalized, unadmitted to human hearths, they seem plunged in the rhythm and life of nature. And considering how

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subjective, for all our pains, must be our appreciation of any animal, it does not matter enormously, perhaps, how much of this is semblance. Let us rather be grateful that they can be images of contemplation for us, as well as of clumsiness.

Cuyp, with a perceptive art, divined this trait in them. The excellent Dutchman—something in his very name seems to predestine him for cows—was no merely bovine specialist. He painted also fighting-cocks, governors of the Indies, huntsmen and cavaliers by lake and wooded hill, and above all the golden haze over the country; but a cow is seldom lacking in the midst—it was his fate to return to them. And they are steeped in his radiant peace; yet the structure of them, their heavy barrel and bony angularities, are retained exactly.

He appreciates them as a tribe and in the variousness of moods and individuals. The two smaller Cuyps in the National Gallery are satisfying in that way. In "Cows on a Bank with Herdsman," a darkish umber landscape with suppressed gold in it, and a threatening of storm, the grouped beasts seem to share the spirit of the boy underneath; on the lonely bank they are domestically at one with him. In the other picture, sharply divided between light and shadow, the tower of Dort appears behind like a golden mirage on the blue, while the cows in front are in a shade of cloud and foliage. They are unconcerned with that surprising vision of the tower, all looking the other way; and their detachment and fixedness are

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so expressive and so far from being vacuous that at last—there is no help for it—you feel they are engaged in contemplation. At the very least, they are the cause of it in others. And Cuyp was sensitive to that. In one scene after another he distills the poetry of cows, and the truth of them.

They have another opportunity in the Nativities painted by old masters, and are most prominent—and most naïve—on early Flemish and German canvases. Among these appearances, one of the most remarkable is a work by a painter quaintly known after his chief picture, as the “Master of the Virgin among Virgins.” In the cow-picture the human figures, who are small, have fallen into primitive attitudes of ecstasy; the cow, though only a “head and shoulders,” is large, and its expression still more dominating. Its horns, rising almost straight up, end with two rather sinister little prongs; its features have a comical set sternness. It has repressed any impulse to approve the holy scene, but there is a tinge of amazement under its clenched dignity.

But they have never found a Cuyp in literature. It may be my ignorance, but it seems to me that their commemoration in books is really inadequate. Wordsworth, who—if one may say it with sympathy—had more of the cow in him than any other poet of his magnitude, should have done more with them. He is excellent with sheep; but for cows is there any picture of his which comes easily to mind except the “forty feeding like one”

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—a line which would just as well describe a party of children at a school-treat? Going onwards, there is no master-hand until we come to Thomas Hardy, who suggests their looks and movements with the intuitiveness of a dweller among them. “Tess,” in its most delectable and subtlest part, is a kind of symphony of the dairy. Stevenson’s little poem has been mentioned. Of our later poets, Mr. Davies seems to have the most receptive feeling for them. Their pure large eyes, seen close, or mildly staring at him out of the fresh grasses, are naturally in tune with a poet of such glad simplicity, who is happy, in his own words:

When happy I  
Stand under boughs  
Exchanging looks  
With sheep and cows.

And then in prose—but how little there seems to be!—there is a preface of Mr. Bain’s to one of his Indian fairy-tales which is a delicious little cow-piece. Under the glaring sun a shapely, delicate animal sidles along a city lane, carrying a small naked Indian child, burnished like bronze under that sky, who holds a begging-bowl. It is the holy theme transposed into the East—the babe and its gentle-eyed Madonna—and the Englishman worships.

The sacred beast. Happy, one thinks, is the inspiration of the people who would deem it so;



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though less happy, possibly, the cows; for it seems a worse fate to be turned adrift in the end to starve, because they may not be killed, than to be taken to a slaughterer's. But lamentable, on the other hand, is the way our every-day speech abuses cows. They become mere images to point a human failing, emblems of clumsiness or placid stupidity. We forget that in domesticating them we have not exactly made them vivacious. Not that a cow would ever suggest the ideal agility of a dancing-partner; yet the way in which by sidling and checking they manage their rectangular bodies, and their sure-footed nimbleness on the hills, are at least as striking as their weightiness.

In practice we treat them kindly on the whole, sometimes luxuriously. I have been in a handsome dairy where they had the convenience of electric light; what a device, one may think, for shortening the long winter evenings! But they cannot want to shorten them in one of those Dutch dairies where they are embedded for the whole winter with soft, clean-smelling straw and everything to their service, a fragrant, tempered warmth filling the long interior; there they would relish eternal hibernations.

Yet perhaps we hardly respect them as we should. Often the process of driving them in—which should be ritual—turns into an insensate din and vituperative scramble; and the end is a muddle. It is plain that the cows themselves know what to do, and would do it much better if they

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were allowed to do it quietly. At those times it is not the cows who look the silliest, and you may wonder what they think of us.

This we can never know, but we know how they appear in our thoughts of them. And that peculiar sure fixity of theirs, as soon as one begins to think about it, seems a challenge to our own behaviour. The cow sits on a bank, utterly immersed or utterly detached—who can say?—and we are swept past it with a hundred agitations. The main current in them is simply speed and the desire of speed: no natural rhythm of ours, but a pace imposed by the machines to which we abandon ourselves. We glance at the cow, and as long as it appears a mere incident of the country's charm and fragrance it is quite delectable and undisturbing. But there is also something else in the cow, namely the deep, slow rhythm of nature and the country. And this may be harder for us to bear, because we are removing further and further from it. When we live in the country we recover it by degrees. Elsewhere it is soon forgotten, like earth disappearing below an air-flight; but we have to make some contact with it, because that is where the savour of existence comes from. And cows, in their odd unabashed way, remind us steadfastly of this other *tempo*.

## THE CHURCH ON THE HILL

THE little church, seen from below, looked like a peeping rabbit or human. A last effort seemed to have carried it to the top of the last heave of ground which rose behind the marshes. With a yet sturdier push, perhaps, it might have climbed a higher downland away to the north; but it would scarcely have got a better view, and certainly could not have inspected the life below so nearly. For there ran the road along the coast, with its comings and goings and partings of the ways; there was a sprinkling of farms and hamlets. In front of them were the flat-stretching marshes; and beyond these again, outside the sandhills, a great expanse of sea rose up to the horizon. The church surveyed the traffic of passing lives on the road below, and the grey-green, scarcely humanized solitude of the farther stretches, where the land has won a victory in its endless conflict with the sea, although the salt water leaves its mark and steals back through interloping creeks and channels.

From outside there was but one feature to note in the church—a round tower. Hence its specular look, as though it were really meant for a light-house or watch-tower. Otherwise it stood so entirely by itself that you might wonder what it was

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there for. There was, as a matter of fact, a tiny parish lurking below. Yet the building was so isolated on the hill that nothing else seemed to belong to it.

To withdraw like that was rather a habit of its fellows, and this one had only gone a little farther off than most. Churches in Norfolk are often august not merely by their size and their outer or inner beauty, but through their way of standing apart from the village. Not too far, as a rule—they visibly “belong”—but they are not going to be squeezed into a corner among casual dwellings. Thus the magnificence of Salle (pronounce, Biblically, “Saul”) is enhanced by a just perceptible detachment; the more ordinary but satisfying Burnham Thorpe has a rare serenity. One gets to appreciate these withdrawals. The churches are not like neighbours who have gone off in a huff, but they know that good neighbours should not be crowded. The stately, firm substance of their beauty needs room to be apprehended. And so, perhaps, does their function. This is the noblest building in the place, and a shrine of the spirit. To see it or use it you must come a little way, and the sleepiest or driest of minds might have a flicker of thoughtfulness on the passage. Even if there are churches which only stand apart because the population has dwindled and left them stranded, the effect is the same in kind and even stronger in its antidote to our confused gregariousness.

The church on the hill, however, remained something of a problem, although by no means one

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of those which "press for a solution." No, it kept to itself, and was a very image of the things one surveys contentedly and incuriously from a distance. But curiosity never quite dies out of a stranger's mind. I had gone up to the church and seen the view it saw, and loitered in the graveyard. I sat in the rough grasses under the tower; but it was too wind-swept a corner to halt long in. The church was locked and invited no entry. Peering through the windows towards the chancel, I saw nothing more than a pillar, a harmonium and some boarding, the last suggesting that repairs were going on; and this fraction of a vision chilled the wish to see any more. And so it might have gone on, the church remaining only a forbidding and distant acquaintance. Expert taste, however, had pronounced it to be "good," and as my companion wanted to paint just such an interior, if only as a relief from winds and restless horses in the fields, we hunted out the guardian and the key one afternoon in the small town which was a metropolis of the neighbouring parishes; went up the hill again and at last walked in.

And then one saw that though it made no pretensions, competed not at all with the splendour of the great churches in the county, it was a rare place. Or rather, perhaps, one felt that it was, for I was only to find out by degrees all that made up the impression. But one stepped down at once into a cool, deep quietness, which was enhanced by the seclusion, and seemed to have gathered itself into

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the only object that stood out on the floor: a grey Norman font whose diminutive massiveness held the repose and strength of ages. Beyond this shadowiness ran a luminous little aisle at the side, and under its clear windows there was one of those bleached, high-backed benches that give the air of a comfortable and ancient room to any corner where they stand. Peace, character and charm distilled themselves. Beauty was less clear. For the middle of the church was fenced in by high wooden partitions like another room or compartment, where you surrendered freedom of vision for immunity from draughts. This was the boarding of which I had a disillusioning glimpse through the window. When you entered the church there was no alternative between being shut off by it, or shut in. Oddly enough, however, even this prosaic enclosure did not cancel the spirit of the place—gave it, in fact, a further secrecy. The boards hinted at something inside them not yet disclosed. I opened the door of this conventicle and went in.

There was, certainly, something unexpected there. Beyond the rows of pews emerged a small wooden pulpit, so brightly painted all over that it positively smiled in its vivacious, dainty colour. Gay and surprising, a real antique though probably restored, it blossomed like a flower from a slender stem, and the stem itself was like another flower, patterned all over with a trenchant device of "barber's poling." It absorbed, as it stood there, all the bleakness of the pews and partitions and

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conjured them away into the time when the beauty of the church was fashioned. It pleased as an artifice and was satisfying in its genuine art; though the world had changed, the emotion out of which it came still lived.

For there had been a meeting of two spirits—the sense of an undivided Christendom and the mind of an Englishman in Norfolk—and the pulpit was as a spark fused out of them. It had six panels, and on four of them were handsomely exhibited the Latin Fathers. Augustine, broad-hatted and in scarlet, was sharpening his quill. On the other two, looking eastwards, were the figures of the donor, John G——, and his wife. Who or what he might have been I did not know. The painter had given him an attractively selfless look. There was almost an ecstasy of aspiration in the pale face and slim kneeling figure; it flashed unworldliness upon you as a vivid fact, unblurred by the signs that he was a man of property, as his fur-trimmed doublet and his gift testified. His wife, standing in the next panel, was much more impassive; but there was a kind of absorbed innocence about her, too. They were both young—extremely unlike those two elderly donors in Boltraffio's picture at Milan who sum up, as it were, all the genial massiveness of giving. The old burgher and his wife in that picture kneel almost with the bulk of mountains; yet one does not desire their solid flesh to melt, because there is a real piety of expression in their attitude and faces, and the melting

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mood is quite sufficiently conveyed in the light and landscape. The Norfolk craftsman was not as good an artist as Boltraffio, but he had produced a very winning specimen in the class of youthful donors. Its charm was all in the naïve, half-tremulous figures; the landscape was provided by the church.

Looking to the east, as they did (with the harmonium slanted out of view) the vista completed itself. The end of the church was very unemphatic, very quiet; beyond the old rood-screen, on which more painted saints were fading away, there was no colour except in some hangings of grey and mellowed red behind the altar. It all looked as if it had grown there in the long tranquillity of nature, allowing the spirit of the place to breathe as it would. The lively little pulpit which transformed the nave was gathered now into the rest of the church, lighting it visibly with colour and mentally with the intentions of the founders. The life suggested by their figures redeemed the quiet of the church from blankness, just as a piece of country is humanized by some trace of habitation, and still more when you have its essence in a picture. A thousand echoes from the pains and rejoicings of the country-people must have sunk into the sturdy calmness of the Norman font, but while that was voiceless this painting was articulate, communicating something that could be felt as present there. It was a blend, somehow, of two extremes; the place was very secluded, it was sanctified, and yet it seemed habitable and even domestic.



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Certainly the old bench in the aisle and that box-like middle enclosure increased one's feeling of being in a room. But probably it might have been given without them. There is a kind of lucid intimateness about a good many Perpendicular churches, especially those in Norfolk. When you have this you get, by the side of its main accomplishments, the charm of the style. Sometimes it goes engagingly with a certain queerness, as in the odd bulge and crookedness of St. Michael's at Coventry, which is gorgeous all the same. There is no enmity between it and perfection of line, or all kinds of splendour, because its light is meant to reveal these things. The result is the uninterrupted view in such big churches, with their communicativeness and space. Everyone as well as everything, you might suppose, was visible in this luminous interior. There is a reasonable and even social air about it. Wonderfully, indeed, it must have shown off the startling fashions of the fifteenth century; an extra inch in those strange horned coifs of the ladies would have been noticed at once. Perhaps it was then that the habit of looking at other people's clothes in church grew strong. Yet, if you are alone, the light and breadth may induce another sort of contemplation as much as the most shadowed mystery.

No doubt the spirit in the "ages of faith" had changed before these churches were made. There may seem to be less religion in them. But nothing is harder than to be certain about this; you must

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know the facts and know what you mean by religion. Did the word mean, to the old Romans who first used it, "that which binds"—a notion which was certainly vivid among the other mediaeval feelings on the subject? There is less of this bindingness, one may fancy, in Perpendicular than in Early English. I can see the aspiring flame in those tall thin lancets of the earlier style, but they depress me; they seem an image of that confinement and narrowness which the modern knows would be death to him in an instant. They are like young beeches which have not been given room to grow into that freedom of tossing heads and spreading umbrage which is the glory of beech trees, but have been compressed in a tight avenue. The confinement dissolves in the next style, and is transmuted again in the light and breadth of the Perpendicular. And the light which flows in, wide and reasonable, seems like a clearing and liberation of the spirit. I know that the fetters were still menacing, as they are apt to be when the spirit is looking for new refuges. Lollards would be tracked down and brought to the Stake; presently St. Joan would be burned at Rouen, and in the next century there would be fires in Smithfield. None the less a change seems to have crept into the stones; there is a human reassurance in the broadly-lit interiors.

But unless you hold that religion and light are incompatible things, you need not feel that anything is vanishing here except that sense of pres-

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sure. These buildings are none the worse because you can think in them. When one goes into one of the big Norfolk churches the instinctive feeling is that one's feet have been set in a large room; and the room shows all its consecrated beauty. Great churches, like those at Walpole and Terrington, enshrine under their clear windows whole triumphs of delighted patience: the painted canopies of fonts, the carving on the tombs, a wonderful handiwork of old benches and coffers. And so insinuatingly, by degrees, does the luminousness of the whole and the charm of the details sink in that one comes positively to resent the notion of churches concealing themselves with painted and stained glass. If anything has been finely done, it cannot be seen too clearly. Endless and prodigal even to fantasy have been the craftsman's devices in the angels, pilgrims and prelates of wood on the hammer-beam roofs, and the diverse poppy-heads on the benches. When I came late one evening into a tiny church, these great dark poppy-heads gave it a queer, fascinating look; it was as though peopled with a set of huge chessmen. These are the playthings of a true art, whose furniture is equal to its structure; so that out of it all there seems to come a voice like Blake's, saying that he knows no other Christianity and no other gospel than a liberty to exercise the divine arts of the imagination; and, again, that art lies in minute particulars. There was nothing insistent in the church on the hill—unless it were that rare little pulpit—

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but one felt that it belonged to the same company. Sitting there, one was joined to a human past as well: to that other company of faithful people and a host of mixed and fugitive lives. But the sense of them never weighed oppressively, as it sometimes does, but came and vanished again in the detachment of the place. I sat there a good deal. At the back of the church the painter silently painted. It was my excuse for coming often and staying so long, and also a reason why I stayed, since—however great the fascination of a silent building may be—there are limits to the time for which it can be enjoyed if one is quite alone. But the companionship was mostly a feeling, for we hardly spoke, or saw each other. In that middle enclosure I was as much shut off as a congregation would have been; secluded, as it were, in a room within a room, and seeing only the pulpit and choir. Stillness enfolded them, and before long one's thoughts folded themselves too, and then seemed expanding into something else which was better than thought; then they veered again, scattering into the fields of the world.

When the place and I separated again, leaving me astray like a wakened sleeper, I opened a book. It was one of Mr. Lawrence's queer books on the Unconscious, which might have seemed too defiant a matter to open in a church; I read it with the trepidations of a stolen pleasure. There was a passionate conviction in the words, and although they spread like waves of sound into the quiet

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they did not jar upon it. The little church could absorb even that.

No doubt the reason was that it had absorbed me. There were moments when it seemed as if my companion and I had been there, and would remain, for ever. What intensified the feeling was that no one else came. To have a charm so entirely unbroken was, of course, the rarest part of the enjoyment; yet inconsequently, at times, we wanted others to share it. The church, through our efforts, remained open for the whole of several afternoons, and I felt some wafts of indignation that no one else should care enough to come and look at it without trouble. Yet as time went on the thought of another visitor became increasingly shocking. It was not merely that we were far gone there in seclusion, so that any stirring of the latch would have made us quiver. By asking for the key and using it for hours we had ensconced ourselves in an undesigned and almost unseemly monopoly. A new-comer who found our bicycles leaning against the porch and a painter's apparatus just inside the door might feel it was the sort of church to reward his curiosity; but to discover someone reading a book within the screen would look uncommonly like usurpation. Certainly the privacy had been thrust on us, but as the days went on the impact of another visitor became hardly thinkable. And not least so when it happened.

In the deep of one afternoon a step sounded in the porch. Then came the creaking of the latch,

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and our imaginations of that small sound were trifling beside the reality. The shock of it flashing between my companion and me was none the less pregnant because we could not see each other. But of what might be passing at that end of the church I had no sort of notion, for a long silence followed. Such, if a policeman has ever found his way into your house at night, is the interval after he has creaked up the first flight of stairs and is examining the drawing-room before mounting the second. No doubt the stranger was looking at the font. It had been plain from the first that he was a stranger. After some measureless moments, I heard his step again in the aisle on the left, where the old bench was. Then a feeling of sympathy for him mixed with my disquiet, as he would soon come upon me and my unwarrantable air of possession. The aisle did not keep him very long. He passed round the side of my partition and came at last into full view.

Then I saw that the one chance which could make a stranger feel more at home there than myself was fulfilled in him; he was a cleric. No matter that this was not his church; from the mere habit and authority of churches he would be at ease and dominate me. I was glad for him and uneasy for myself, and pushed away my book. But there was the virtual certainty of a remark which would save the situation. It was natural and almost inevitable that now or later, when he had finished inspecting the church, he should come up

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and say something about the pulpit which was there between us. How impossible that he should even pass that delicious little marvel without stopping to look at it! And then in an instant, on the common ground of a genuine if restrained enthusiasm, my behaviour would be ratified.

But none of these things happened. He had the air of not seeing me at all, though I think it improbable that he didn't. For this there might have been several good reasons. What was more remarkable was that he made no halt at the pulpit—seemed to consign that, too, to the invisible. He looked at a hymn-list and then went on to the harmonium, which he regarded with a genuine interest. I believe that at the other end of the church the notices, but not the font, detained him. And that appeared to be all, for so far as my view and my companion's went his curiosity about the church seemed purely professional.

He passed out of sight, and his step, receding down the other aisle, was heard presently at the bottom of the church again. There, as the painter was sitting in the very fairway to the door, I expected some utterance would break out at last. But still there was silence, until the lifting of the latch, again, told that this mysterious visit was over.

The encounter had been so sudden, short and—as far as any communion of minds went—in-human, that for a minute or two we prolonged the silence half-incredulously. Then I went in search of my companion, and she being also in a dumb

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surprise there was another pause before we burst out laughing. The visit, so far as it concerned us, amounted as near as possible to nothing. It was as though the silence of the place had engulfed our visitor. And it seemed clear that the responsibility for this zero was not ours. But in another sense we could feel that everything had happened, for we had faced Intrusion in a semi-official shape and its discretion was amazing. So far from this visit heralding others, there was now, somehow, a certainty that no one else would come. And no one did come. It seemed even that no one had come. The vivid quiet, the stillness unbroken by a foot-fall remained till we unwillingly forsook the church and left it to its week-time solitude.

Then for a few days more I saw it outwardly as I had seen it at first. The round tower darted a vigilant eye along the coast as if that were its only business. The rest of the building looked as unremarkable as before.

But it was not the same, for it now encased a memory. I have never been inside it since, but I am sure the memory and the vision are still justified. The donor and his saints are there in their charm and fragrance of spirit. The church, in spite of all that carpenters have done, has a peace beyond understanding. But perhaps as great a wonder is the union of that pertinacious outside with the utter detachment of the interior. I wonder if there are human souls and bodies united with just that difference of feature.



## SATURDAYS

T H E R E is, of course, a great deal in a name; it refuses to be a mere sign, and the difficulty is to stop putting meanings into it. One finds this happening even with such well-worn counters as the names of the days of the week. There are people of indomitable sensibility who have only to hear these names and instantly, as from a dark screen, "Tuesday" or "Friday" flashes a colour to them—crimson or yellow or blue, gay or sombre. They are the "visuals" and belong to the same race as those who in listening to a symphony see twinkling waters, or bright Renaissance-looking crowds going up and down great staircases. Others, a much larger number, which probably includes everyone of us at times, find in the mere look and sound of those vocables a character or a quality. In some way or other each day asserts itself. Thus Wednesday sounds a little pensive, and yet has an undulating and reassuring lightness about it; like Gray's melancholy, it is a "good, easy sort of a state." Thursday seems to recall us abruptly to the practical; it has a certain brusqueness.

But these are whims of idiosyncrasy: fancies built, at most, on sounds and letters—a mere nominalism of the days. "That's only what it's

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*called*, you know," as the Queen said to Alice. What *is* it? What is it, not merely in the name but in the fact of a day, which bestows a real and perceptible atmosphere? Simply a link of association, no doubt; a question of the tiresome or eventful things we do on it. For if this kind of atmosphere is to cling about a day it must either have sprung out of something ineffaceably vivid, or grown vegetatively out of the sheer repetition of ideas and habits. Friday, to a Catholic, may suggest fish or fasting, and to others a vague presage of disaster. Everyone has his notions of the days, though they are usually blotted out by the dates of his engagements. Their order in the week is the only feature of them which is just the same for everybody. But even so the feelings evoked by the middle days may be highly variable, and fainter. To have that inseparable kind of atmosphere which really seems intrinsic, a flavour mysteriously constituted, as it were, by the day itself and not by our private notions, it must be a day which comes at the beginning or the end and produces actions, feelings or suggestions which we all obey. And the only days of this compulsive force are Saturday, Sunday and Monday.

It would be bitter and needless to enlarge on the "Monday feeling." There are times, blessedly enough, when it is good to think of the clear week awaiting a piece of work in hand. But nothing can alleviate the first moment. That beginning, or return, is like an ache in the head, the reminder

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from a tooth, the collar on the rubbed shoulder of a horse, the road that stretches without turning. The feeling of a Sunday is like an opiate by contrast. In that way it may seem a monotone, although the most diverse and subtle notes make it whatever it may be. The Saturday feeling contrasts with those of both Sunday and Monday. It seems all lively impulse, and so a thing to be enjoyed for the moment, but dissected at peril. Yet to think about a feeling is no bar—is perhaps even the best way—to reviving it and enjoying it better. Saturday is the more Saturday if one knows how deep it has gone into the fibres.

For it becomes a kind of secondary instinct. If civilization can foster these dumb impulsions, it has promoted this one; by reaction, as it were, for Saturday is a healthy insurgence or rebellion. So it has been, at least in England: the charter or symbol of all games and holidays. By its mere place in the week it governs the whole week's perspective. That is, of course, for those who work—who work or have worked for stated hours and mostly at the will of other people. And such is our universe that this includes all but a small numerical fraction. Indeed, by transmission or suggestion, the influence of Saturday is such that I doubt if one should reserve a margin. Everyone whom we know has once, at least, worked at school or at someone's bidding; and everybody without exception has known the labour of mere living. In one way or another we have the habit of this

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weekly *finis*. At the beginning of the week it is only a flickering memory; but when once the middle has inclined, the whole block of days begins to quiver and tilts with increasing downward speed to Saturday. Sometimes the friction has been such that you only desire to lay down your weary bones for the whole of Saturday and Sunday. Indeed, one aspect, for the industrious, will always be a heart-felt negative; this is the time when you do *not* go to the office, to chambers, the consulting-room, the schoolroom.

And so, now and then, you will not want to go beyond this negative; it is just the chance of such a void and vacancy which makes the pleasure. How delicious, after all, to have time to do nothing! But then one's vital being throbs again; and that vacancy is filled. It is because Saturday has been a day of preferences, because we have embellished it, as far as might be, with the things we like to do, that it has a joyous and almost tangible individuality. It is receptive of symbols. A garden, a car, a tennis racket; a pair of old walking boots, a railway ticket or a book—may each of them, by endeared repetitions, become the chosen sign of it to somebody. The only need, if it is to be expected and remembered, is that there should be a sign. The vitality of feelings depends on it; you cannot revive them exactly unless they have attached themselves to some concrete thing. Strange or irrelevant as that object may be, it has only to produce itself often enough—or once will do, if your

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feeling was highly receptive just then—for it to become a key of anticipations and a passport to memory. Given the clue, a conviction of Saturday follows. It may be so strong an assurance of things hoped-for that under the most veiling circumstances, such as a holiday where virtually all the days are Saturdays, the true and particular day will still announce itself.

The symbol may belong, like the garden or the boots, to what you want to do, or it may shade off through all the degrees of the unlikely. My symbol is irrelevant to anything I may be going to do. But with a strange punctuality it draws out of memory one, or many, of a set of glimpses.

The first is the high street of a country town, a street so uncommonly broad that it should have been christened so, for the houses along the lower side seem to have receded from their red-roofed neighbours opposite to the furthest limit. In fact, it was not merely a street, but a pool or eddy of the great Bath road, which expanded here to rest a little before encountering the western hills. Towards the sheltered and busier end little market stalls and tables had put out from the pavement, fringing the wide middle space. They endured no longer than sand-castles; for by one o'clock, when we were released from school, they were being folded away, though of life and incident there was still plenty. Country purchasers went in and out of shops, farmers stalked about and chatted; it was the one day when the large, still street had con-

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spicuously an air of *fiesta*. To see it just then when business was relaxing in diversion, all parties bethinking themselves of dinner and a drink, their own spirits rising at the thought of undiluted gossip, was to condense in one view the vivacity and repose of Saturday. It was all most heartening to a schoolboy. There were other half-holidays in the week, but relatively they were on sufferance. No one but this was inspired and confirmed, as it were, by the pulsations of the world in general.

After the dinner-hour the bustle ebbs slowly, and relishingly. It is the time for the carrier's carts and little omnibus-vans which have been waiting discreetly through the morning. They have been loaded with parcels and now they fill with people. The drivers unhurryingly expect these passengers, and the horses look round sometimes to see if the tale is complete—but to name horses is suddenly to remember the abyss of time, for the last of those patient animals, with the rumbling, rickety little vans they drew, are yielding or have yielded to motor-driven vehicles. The change is a convenience for the humans and a release for the horses, but also an extinction; the fading out of that obstructive, slow leisureliness which was the essence of these journeys. They flourished on broken harness and all the delays of the road. The passengers swayed in a suspension of time which blotted out both the household scurry that had begun the day and the vision of the week to follow. It was an interval to be prolonged and savoured. And all this is not yet

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lost, as many of the newer vehicles resemble the old so far as a mechanical thing can be like one of wayward animal motions. But there is no matching the real antique, with its somnambulous horse, its time-worn gear, and the name of the village painted in white, wavering letters on its dusty sides.

By degrees they limbered out of the town and scattered, some pursuing the little river valley which belonged cosily to man, while others crawled into solitude towards the sky-line of the downs. As they went the talk inside each of them would be often of the others, Chalkcombe relating what it had heard of Winton Bassett, and Millford the gleanings from Hensbury; it lingered on the receding town, and not only on the price of things there but on the grocer's lively conversation and the new assistant at the draper's; finally it settled on the only topic of really life-long interest—their selves. When you passed one of the vans with its murmurs or its silences, the occupants looked out as from a small moving world of their own. The tedium of that world and their existence, mainly diversified, like the movement of the van, by intermittent jogs and jolts, was illuminated now, so that it had a freshness and almost a romance. The journey gave a flick to their gossip, the glimpse of the town enlivened it. Chance encounters by the road were commented on, and the affairs of their village, being seen from a distance, stirred them to consciousness in an unusual way. The feeling

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which made the women in the omnibuses chatter inspired, more laconically, the men in the gigs. It was not quite extinguished even in the patient walkers who trudged back on foot with their parcels along the road.

So much could be overheard, or guessed, as one passed. But the fascination of what was then chiefly a dumb-show to me lay in its mystery—a mystery of remoteness coming into knowledge. All round lay the hills, folding a region of their own in their contours, with unknown distances beyond. They held places whose very names were alluring because they could never be reached in an afternoon. With the passing of the carriers all this vague wideness was suddenly legible, and then after a brief reality it faded back into the unexplored. Not immediately, however, but with a gradual insect-like movement. You met the carriers and carts and wayfarers strung out indefinitely along the roads; then some of them were absorbed by the half-way villages, and at last the others were swallowed up in the pockets of the downland whence they had come. The pulsations of the afternoon were over, and the downs spread out again in their undulating vacancy.

The market, and then this vanishing procession, repeated once a week in chill springs and rainy autumns, in the blue of summer afternoons and the short grey wintry light, are my real symbol for Saturday. It has lasted so long now that I hardly think it will be displaced. At all events any thought



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of Saturday calls it up at once: and it, likewise, calls up the day, even in the most incongruous surroundings of streets and cities. If it comes at some other time it will alleviate even a Monday, reminding me that the scene or one not unlike it will recur presently just where it happened, and in hundreds of other places. I rejoice that it should. I never imagined that the people who figured in it were, in the usual course of things, particularly blest or happy, in fact I suspected the reverse, but this was a moment which released them, linked them to something ubiquitously pleasant and awoke a corresponding thrill in me. It was pure chance that they came my way, but the image was a real one, for the marketers enjoyed the amusement and adventure and change of horizon which are right attributes of the day.

Why, however, the vision of them should have sunk so far in—why it should have become *my* Saturday—is less easy to explain. I can only imagine that my horizon changed as well. Country-folk who were still strange to me, and appeared—except for a shepherd here and there—to be as unforthcoming and surly as they might be expected to be towards the interloping schoolboy tribe, became suddenly vivid in their own right and reality; and their life in far-away corners was vivid too. The expanse of the downs, fold on fold of them, enticing and yet alien, was made human and articulate in these men and women. The voice might not convey much of meaning, but it was a

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voice all the same. One could think of those regions as being a home. And the combination of that remote Nature and these remote dwellers in it gave, perhaps for the first time, a sense of what the country could be. When we talk of the country, not of "nature," the thought of man is always in the front or background of our minds. It is a place where he lives, labours or enjoys. But the deep part of the country and an untrammelled feeling of it only exist where roofs are not too many and the minds of those who live there have been subdued to what they work in. When we are in towns our thoughts fly to that very bareness of the thinly-peopled places as a refuge. But in this remembered glimpse it was otherwise with me; the downs, while hardly losing their secrecy, became more real through the people who lived in them.

Saturday, after all, should be the most human of the days. The tension is loosed; we may escape from the devouring routine and become ourselves, with individual whims and predilections.

That is the dream—and the difficulty. For it is scarcely to be achieved in the mass, by numbers. This is a case where numbers and unity make everything harder, except the playing of games which require teams to play them. All else, from golf-courses and high roads to lonely lanes and field-paths, is menaced by Saturday's invasiveness. Sweet privacies are violated, the charm of the country imperilled by those who seek it diligently.

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You say this is an odious feeling. It would be nobler to be upborne and exhilarated by the sense that numbers of other people are enjoying similar pleasures at the same moment, than to feel, on less frequented holidays, the satisfaction one undoubtedly does feel at the thought that they are working. But common sense invites us to distinguish. If we are seeking pleasures of solitude we should not be asked to feel gregariously. Even at a concert or play the stimulus which the other people certainly impart is a chequered one. The only scene, I expect, where you can completely and appropriately sink yourself in the multitudinous feeling of Saturday is one of those vastly-watched football matches which more and more endorse it. I constantly mean to attend one of them, for more reasons than this; but I never do. Not that I share the opinion of a portly gentleman whom I heard saying at the barber's the other day that football was only fit for miners. (He was thinking of the "All Blacks," but his words extended to all branches.) His refinement was beyond me. What deters me from going to see a professional football match is partly laziness and partly, I suppose, timidity. Enjoying crowds, I yet fear the intense concentration of this one; or rather the frantic zeal of its two factions, which would put a less concerned spectator out of countenance with both.

Why be at pains, after all, to worship Saturday? When one thinks of its populous density, of the way it becomes an institution and routine, a strong

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revulsion of feelings enters. It is a mistake to expect much from a given day. The great things happen as they will, careless on what day of the week they fall—as we are careless, really. Probably that is why out of many undoubtedly delightful Saturdays one remembers so few, whereas the times when its promises were not performed are sharp in memory. How constant was that habit of English weather—to rain at the week-end, and on Saturdays more than Sundays; how often has one taken a ticket at Paddington, with sunshine glowing outside, only to find the Thames valley pregnant with thunderstorms, and all blotted out at last in a drenching downpour!

But these things are relative. The ideal Saturday may be a dream, its generous dawn belied; no person of sense, you may think, would freely stake his pleasure on this overcrowded day any more than he would choose, if free, a holiday in August. So much is truth or truism. But for most people it really does not matter. Only if you are serenely independent of all the days can you afford to disparage this one. If you live, or ever have lived, the usual toiling week you knew the upspringing relief of its last morning. An expectant sense of delight is in your bones, and there is no resisting it. At this moment—which happens to be a Saturday—writing is difficult because the school-children are free and racketing noisily up and down the street. It is one of Saturday's coercions, but I only resent it superficially. Deeper down is

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the feeling that they are using the day; while I, if I persist in going on, abuse it.

And who knows what retribution may follow? It would be a sin against the oldest of the gods, the name-lord of the day: Saturn, the lord of innocence and plenty. Surely it is not for nothing that this is the only day whose name restores the brighter antique gods instead of the battering Norse divinities. The deity who contrived it so, absorbing any troublesome Scandinavian who stood in the way, was certainly not a god in his decline, dispossessed and inconsolable;

grey-haired Saturn, quiet as a stone,  
but the god in his prime, all-powerful and beneficent giver of the golden age; when spring-time really *was* spring, and the whole world pulsed accordingly. Saturday is the only trace remaining of this vanished glory. So let us make the most of it. Even in our own story of creation it was the first day when man had a full twenty-four hours to spend. Let it still be Sabbath for the Jews and Sabato in name to the Italians—who, indeed, may be said to keep their Saturday on Sunday afternoons. But for us may it remain a day when we shake off chains and rejoice in sports, and pleasures of the arts, and country pleasures. It should have sped vitality before it sinks to drowsiness. One gleam from the golden age is enough to keep faith in it alive—our unvanquishable thirst for being happy.

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WE have all felt, and still feel, the pervasiveness of Sunday. As an atmosphere, Saturday, however volatile and diffused, is almost a meagre make-believe in comparison. The only thing it can do is to undermine Sunday insidiously by turning it into Saturday. And by degrees it persuades us that Sundays were to a great extent really Saturdays. Then we feel that the Puritans were much more revolutionary in the matter than our gay contemporaries. Yet Sunday remains; diminished, certainly, in mass and length, diluted; but still powerful and on the whole beneficent. For reasons of which some are good, it is likely to continue. Subtle and ubiquitous, its particles float in the air; its form may change, but we have been long saturated.

For we knew about Sunday long before we knew about any other day. It may have been a pre-conscious knowing. We can hardly *remember* when we first identified a prayer book or were affected by the sight of our elders going mysteriously to church; and even if we could, there must have been a time before that when we watched as a dog watches. And as to him, so to us the first sense of it must have been a general air of inhibition. It

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was as if the flow of existence had been gently but firmly slowed down or diverted into another course.

The rigours of the old Scottish Sunday or, for the matter of that, of the middle English, are very likely as unknown to any who may read this as they are to me. But the "Sunday feeling" can expand without them. Even those who are innocent of church in their tender years, or who afterwards ignore it, must feel the change in pulsation. You wake and perceive the lull, the altered rhythm: the stilled pause of workaday activities. It is suspension, with a pulse beating somewhere in it; an actual or possible serenity. And as the feeling of it steals over your mind you can almost believe that this experience which has recurred so often is not a creation of the minds of men, but that Nature has wrapped herself in a Sabbatic quietude. In sheer fact there is more of nature and less of man on a Sunday morning than on others. There is no one in the fields, and no one in the gardens till a cottager saunters out late with his pipe. The birds are more audible, and so may be fancied to be singing better.

Who hath not dreamed that even the skylark's  
throat

Hails that sweet morning with a gentler note?

The lines are Macaulay's, and he wrote them at Cambridge for a prize poem which did not get the prize; "the first lines," his biographer remarks

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caustically, "were in themselves pretty and simple enough to ruin his chance in an academical competition."

It is not to be suggested that Macaulay, although an optimist most religiously brought up, really believed that the birds were jargoning more sweetly, but he expressed a very possible feeling. Natural things appear more tranquil because we are at ease, receptive of their influences. That unceasing life of birds and trees and flowers is the more distinct because there is a break in ours.

Towns, too, are more somnolent. The streets will only have a chastened life, and they wake lazily to that. For a long time the sky and the stones have it all to themselves. So here, too, there is a queer regained independence, artificial things outlined almost as though a part of nature. The squares exhale their pride or decency, the insignificant houses their suppressed design. There is no voice except the voice of the milkman and the vendor of Sunday papers. The houses in the by-streets slumber until a man comes out in shirt-sleeves and purchases his news.

There is the voice of bells, of course, but how thin it is usually in England compared to the deep-voiced, jangling carillons of foreign towns. Loudly and abruptly they break your sleep, announcing Domenica; warning you there is no peace unless you are in church. The early summons is both devout and practical, for it gets the people to church and they get their devotions done. And



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certainly there is the wisdom of the dove in those who give their primal thoughts to consecrated things; and a wisdom, which may not be wholly of the serpent, in unchequered relaxation afterwards. For the leisure of a Sunday morning is divinely good.

It is a sacrilege to write letters then, but you may read them—not your mere transitory letters, which are withheld as there is no post—but letters with the finer human graces in them, like Cowper's or Fitzgerald's. Some time you may write a letter yourself, but it is best postponed. This is an hour for books, the longest or the shortest, Boswell or Lamb or Browne. All one asks for is a mellowed breadth in them; that their golden, ampler leisure should enhance one's own. Likewise it may be an hour for by-ways, and for unearthing books which you had forgotten you possessed. Certainly it is an apt time to read the poets; out of the new-fallen stillness those cadences of theirs, which are of earth and yet unearthly, created by the spirit, sound with a rare nearness. Milton and Wordsworth are the Sabbatic poets, "comely and reviving." Yet why not try Shelley—"atheist Shelley" who is half an angel, and never ineffectual when there is really time to migrate to his world, for which those unvexed hours are just the opportunity? It is astonishing how far "Prometheus Unbound" will carry you before lunch-time. Or you may prefer Donne's poems to his sermons as a dean. Or the morning may end with some

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more frivolous contemporary, for the essence of it is to have no end that is certain. Only beware of yielding early to the Sunday newspaper; its columns nibble away the precious hours and should be reserved.

As a matter of fact, the first sense of these depths in a Sunday morning probably did not come from roaming among books. It dawned conversably in long talks after breakfast, with pauses but no interruptions; and it expanded in country walks—walks across country, where the pervading quiet still goes with you and is rather crowned than broken at lunch in the parlour of the “Old Hare” or the “Dog and Gun.” It did not come with the years of innocence, but with those of indiscretion. For this freedom is certainly not one of the intimations vouchsafed to early childhood. We make it for ourselves. It is an entire reaction from whatever trials of extra washing, brushing and best clothes we may have suffered in our earliest years. Morning service did not really compensate for this strain. The presence of so many older people, likewise with a constraint on them, brought it to a point. There was no getting beyond this dense block of human beings, with their uneasy fascination, uneasy because it hovered on the verge of the absurd but seldom actually got there. The result may be a kind of social terror. There is a subtle difference between “morning” and “evening” church in these respects—but of that in a moment.

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A leisurely, unbroken morning gives you the blessings of length without its curses. It is timeless, really, and in spirit eternal. And it may go on defying time; I think gratefully of rain-swept winter days in the country when this busy idleness protracted itself without a break into the evening, meals being only the merest adjournment where one took in, as it were, the beauty of it. In any case you arrive freshly at the afternoon, feeling that the day has scarcely begun for you. No doubt if you have spent the morning dutifully you ought to enjoy the fruits of leisure all the more. But it does not follow. For this reversion is not as the spontaneous leisure of the morning; it must strive against a slight fatigue, against inertia. And though the old tradition which gave up Sunday afternoon to sleep is obsolete among "nice people," the touch of nature in it repeats itself. Books may waver in the hand, and a walk turn into a constitutional. The boldest way of facing the situation is certainly afternoon church, the essence of which goes best with a small church a little way off in the country. A mile or two across the fields invigorates. Inside the walls, the stiffness of the morning has melted already; and should there be a sermon and you fall asleep, you know that you are not doing this ignobly in an armchair, but almost ritually.

But should it be a different scene, St. Paul's or the Abbey, you will not sleep; you have gone, in a measure, for the sermon. Sundays in London have been unfairly maligned, but perhaps it was

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not till the week-end habit grew inveterate that the relief of staying there could be really appreciated. The stillness of the early hours is there, and those leisured indoor hours are just as accessible. It is one's own fault if the chances of the day are wasted. If you lunch with friends you have parried the difficult hour of the afternoon and secured a pleasure, and you come to it with a mind at ease, and not distracted and ruffled, as on week-days, by the toils of the morning. Nothing is blighting except to squander part of the day in paying duty calls on those whom one does not really want to see; and that custom is now practically extinct in London.

If you go to church there, no appointed place or pew need bind you. The glory of St. Paul's is within reach, and the sweet voices of the Temple. Then if the gloomy inanimateness of the streets throws a chill (that peculiar chill of the dead City), or if you have one of those familiar after-church revulsions, remedies are easy. One can go a-gipsying even in London. Within a mile or so, by Aldgate, there is the stream of another world and another people, thronging one or two small streets with bright Jew faces and a perfect revelry of huckstering. Voices are incessant, features unfamiliar, people sit in open windowless shops at the receipt of custom. When you have had enough of it all, buy a sandwich and cake at Monnickendam's and take them down to the little terrace under the Tower's grey walls, by the silent ever-living river.

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The Zoo, if one can go there, yields its discreetest pleasure on Sundays. I will not pretend to think that the animals are happier, but they may feel a slight relief at the presence of fewer humans. We may be sure, at any rate, that they know when it is Sunday. For us it is the best moment to contemplate them, and it despatches the mind on strange journeys. And then, even while we are being refreshed, we feel a kind of religious pity for the animals that are fated to pose here as examples of their kind, captives just that we may know their imprisoned wildness and beauty. The Zoo is a keen pleasure and a mixed one, but at least there are some birds and fishes and quiescent creatures who will not reproach us.

But these are digressions, and I return to the point in the afternoon when we are first conscious of the length of Sunday; for its length, at any rate, is a trait which can and shall be reproduced in this essay. As an afternoon sensation this need not be unpleasant, nor is the experience the same for everybody. Out of doors, on a Sunday in the country, these may be the most savorous moments—and on a week-end visit possibly the first suspicious ones. Now the parson rests a little from his labours; and the working journalist who has taken the key of the fields feels, not the length of time, but its exasperating shortness. Just when his cup of enjoyment is filling and the exhilaration of the day melting to a soft enchantment he must catch the train for London. But for the world at

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large, we may say, this time between three and four gives the first plain signs of "diuturnity." It may be a premonition, and it may be more. But the sensation is like an opiate now, and seldom piercing. The afternoon is to the rest of the day exactly what Sunday is to the other days—a pause; and for most people the sense of its having lasted too long only becomes a gnawing one some hours later.

But then the bells will have rung again. They announce the crisis of the evening, and epitomize, almost, the "feeling" of Sunday. So many diverse things—peace, annoyance, blitheness, melancholy—can be conveyed in the sound of them. Certainly they are less imperious than they were in the morning; instead of commanding they seem to be alluring. They are not delusive about that, for just so does church in the evening differ from the morning's ceremony. The officialdom has melted—and with this democratized air there is a sense that no one is in the place unless, for whatever reasons, he wants to be. Hymns are both livelier and more wistful—more emotional. In the country, at any rate, where you can see the character of things, the morning stands obviously for the old fast-fixed order, and the evening for sentiments pent underneath.

Hearing the bells, however, we probably do not go. Indeed, they provoke queer contraries of feeling. Some may find them as persuasive of the beauty of holiness as Lamb found the cool aisles

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of a country church to be on a week-day. For minds at the other extreme, church bells are merely an exasperating nuisance. Most of us hover well between these limits, but for a great many, among whom I count myself, the sound has a decided bent to melancholy. Why should it make one's spirits really dejected, even sharply irritable? Often this mood goes back to childhood, and it does not come entirely from the bells, but from the evening. Perhaps it came from being tired, and suddenly reminded of a constraint that was just ending. Perhaps it was even atavistic, an echo from the first men who saw daylight waning and night approaching with its dusk and terrors.

Later on there is a conflict of feelings. If you very constantly

“have with holy bell been knoll'd to church.”

there may be a distinct ennui at having performed the same thing so often. But at the same time other fibres are vibrating to an enchantment; deeper still, old pieties are rooted. In any case there is a secret throe in the reminder that we have parted with a fragment of ourselves. And if the sound is, as Froude said, the most mediæval of all things, the echo of a vanished world, there may be a sort of ghostly intrinsic melancholy belonging to it which reaches us unawares.

Eventually this “phobia” of the bells wears away. They become simply one of the voices of

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the evening, although peculiar enough to separate this one evening from the others. It holds again a quiet like the morning's, a mirror wherein nature seems reflected; only with the difference of evening from morning, sunset from sunrise. Everything is mellowed and a little pensive, for the natural objects have been dyed in the thoughts and feelings of men and are no longer independent. Something is ending, at which you are a little sad; that this should prelude something else—a return to the stir and business of the world—may be exhilarating or depressing. But the balance is peculiar while it lasts. It is like a September day, which at one and the same time reminds you of the perishableness of things and looks as if it would hang there for ever. One of the fine still evenings in that month is the real setting for this phase of the Sunday feeling—a mood so constant in its way, that it might be called the Sunday *sentiment*. It suggests a little of "Tears, idle tears," and a little more of Collins' pure ode to Evening, and something more which is neither of these but especially Sabbatic.

An actual calm, a possible sanctity, some traces of the boredom of constraint are ingredients of that Sunday quality. And each of them invades the other. The bells have their wistfulness, and in the country the large peacefulness is stiffened by the aspect of the villagers in their Sunday clothes. We react against this by going to the other extreme of movement; presently Sunday may be



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known as the day on which there is the greatest number of cars on the road. Yet the Sunday feeling, invisible and inherent, remains. There is a tradition that it is impossible for an Englishman to get away from it; in whatever scene of Continental gaiety, or in whatever "outpost of civilization" he may be, the seven-day rhythm of his consciousness warns him of a Sunday. In point of fact English and Continental Sundays are very much alike now. I used to believe, however, that the feeling did recur independently of almost any reminder; but now, whether from a waning of potency in the day, or of piety in myself, I am not so sure. One or two Sundays in mountain solitudes of rock have found me oblivious of it. Very likely it only disappears in some quite unhumanized tract of country. I mistrust its punctuality now in far deserts or jungles.

That sensation of length, for instance, dwindles in the absence of conventions and signs. The climax of it—varying, of course, with persons and circumstances—might be timed at about seven o'clock or after. Then we may find ourselves even wishing for Monday. We almost envy the oblivion of that old reprobate, Thomas Trumbull, in "Redgauntlet," who having mixed his wits on Saturday night, thought that the clocks which were striking five on Sunday morning were the Sunday evening clocks.

"Eh? Is Sunday come and gone already?—Heaven be praised! Only it is a marvel the after-

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noon is sae dark for the time of the year—Sabbath has slipped ower quietly, but we have reason to bless ourselfs it has not been altogether misemployed. . . . I never remember a Sabbath pass so cannily off in my life.”

Doubtless he was punished by a long Sunday with a headache in it. But we have known the real length, and there is a sudden wild revulsion against the sequence of the day. It must burst out in something different. Dinner (but not supper) may appease it. Then dramatic societies bring out old wicked plays or intriguing new ones. It is the time when we wait for something to happen, and this hardly ever comes.

I remember one Sunday when it did. That was in a village of the Dolomites where life had changed very little.

Sunday followed age-long habits there. It was decisive in the clothes. The women, as they came out of church in unvarying, enveloping dresses—the smallest girls quite indistinguishable from their grandmothers except by size—might have walked out of a past century. Long black skirts, round, flat little black-ribboned hats, with two wide streamers of black silk or satin depending to the waist behind, were intensely Victorian. Only the festal aprons of the women, a rich full blue, or blues and greys shot with gold, and the pinks and geraniums stuck in the black hats of the men, were radiant with colour. The women filed out along the path; the men sat on a long bench or

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talked in knots as they do all the world over. In the afternoon there was a sermon and the assembly was repeated. These Roman Catholic peasants are staunch in observance, and their Sunday may be long; only in hay-time it breaks suddenly and gaily into another sort of day, when men, women and children, going back for the week to the high meadows, troop up to the inn with their goats, food and implements—the men in coloured jackets now and the women with un-Sunday aprons and kerchiefs over the heads. Then there is a halt; and with luck, an hour or two for refreshments and music and dancing in the long bar-parlour.

But on this particular Sunday hay-time was over. The day was fading uneventfully, and as its light went one was caught by the feeling of lassitude which demands to be assuaged. And for once the unexpected happened. It came unobtrusively enough in the arrival of two walkers, a man and a girl, about supper-time; but the man was one of those who make their circumstances. Having supped he began to sing and then dance, by himself at first; in country flings and reels dear to the villagers, who flocked into the bar-parlour to see, while we, strangers and sojourners, flocked too.

The Austrian beguiled. Handsome and well-made, he danced in the shadowy lamp-light; an artist in his movements, an athlete exulting in holiday vigour as he stamped and slapped his chest and thighs in the measure, with an enticing

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air of comradeship that infected us all. His companion partnered him, and the two maids of the inn, and an English girl, one after the other; it was a sort of country waltz with insinuating turns and clasps. Everyone was absorbed in watching or dancing. Far up the dusky room a village couple spun round in a slow monotonous ecstasy. The man's personality was a spell weaving it all. The mandolin and accordion went on playing, dances and songs followed each other until, about midnight, this transmuted evening came to an end.

It was a day which certainly made the best of both worlds. This is an ill-reputed trick, as a rule; but to achieve it naturally, with an outlet of pure joy, seems the fulfilment of an ideal Sunday.

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A L A D Y told me one day that she had seen five brown-robed friars in a motor-car, and been thrilled at the sight. It seemed an odd but not impossible vision, for this was in Italy. Motoring has the intensity of a sacred passion there, and monks and friars are not so very few. More usual, certainly, and more pleasing in the mountainous region where it was said to have happened is the sight of a pair of the religious climbing a hill-side with long staves (they are alpenstocks) in their hands, just like two holy men pilgriming through the landscape of some old master. But these others might have yielded to the general impulse, or been driven to it by necessity; and whether there are any prohibitive rules in the matter I do not know. Perhaps this is just how monks will be represented some time by anyone who wants to be facetious. Instead of those Victorian whimsicalities of them passing the flowing bowl in a parlour ("trolling" it, I think, is the word), or fishing gaily by a stream, they will be pictured in a car.

Anyhow, the truth of the observation seemed beyond doubt a few days later, when a car drove up and halted on the neighbouring high-road and

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four men emerged from it in the guise of monks. They wore long, loose brown robes fastened about the waist by a girdle, and their heads appeared to be not tonsured merely, but shorn.

When they drew close, however, this super-monastic semblance proved an illusion. They were as laical as I. The brown robes were long dust-coats, wrappers capacious as dressing-gowns—modern amplifications of the “wrap-rascals” of an earlier day—and the shaven crowns were not their own, but were grey rubber caps enclosing hair and ears and neck, as it were an extension of those coverings with which Rugby footballers protect themselves in the scrum.

Perhaps, then, no monks had ever driven merrily in a car? These men were the *démenti* of a legend which has yet to be proved. But while they stood on the road, that first incongruous, monastic impression printed itself on my eyes and refused to be driven out of my head. There was something rather portentous about it. These travellers did not look very jolly; they had a severe and business-like attitude. In this pseudo-monkish habit they seemed as disquieting as messengers from Mars. Were they, after all, the heralders of some new thing? Had an unknown movement begun—we were very far from any “centres”—of which this party were conceivably the evangelists, true latter-day friars summoning mankind to a closing of the ranks, a greater purity and severity of motoring? At all events, they looked charged with purpose

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as they stood there; as though the long gown, so far from being donned for comfort, were really the emblem of some secret brotherhood. Such might, indeed, be the masters of the earth, until they were dispossessed by the masters of the air.

I thought of what a society of friar-motorists might do, especially in the land of which St. Francis and these travellers were natives. They might diminish that terrific roar of the engines, of which even some Italians complain—until they get into a car and forget about it. They might make life safer for the multitude. With what a tremor, arriving in Rome a year or two ago for the first time since motors became prevalent, I read in next morning's paper that two Portuguese bishops had been knocked over in the Corso and conveyed to hospital! But motoring in Italy is far more than a means of circulation, invaluable though it be as that. It is a noble sport, for which their nerves are as steel and whip-cord. This very summer of the "friars," an auto-omnibus plying on a famous mountain route was halted for a moment at a high turn on the road so that the conductor might display to his trembling convoy of foreigners the last remains of another omnibus lying at the bottom of the ravine, which had gone over two days before and been shattered (with the loss of only one life). But I would not play upon our frailer northern nerves or detract from the marvellous resource of Italian chauffeurs. A youth who had never seen the hair-pin bends and drops

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into vacancy on that road before, drove me round them as if he had never done anything else—and would have driven twice as fast if he had been allowed.

Only, as I looked at the monastic motorists, I felt they were not the kind of people to make those things easier. Their strange garb marked them for the rigour of the game. It would be the asceticism of adventure. I don't fancy that they would ever have thought about silencers, or curbed their speed in high places through fear of a *disgrazia*.

For such a brotherhood, of course, would be friars with a difference. The friars began by being poor; motoring began with riches. St. Francis praised the sun and the sky, birds and flowers; the motorist is apter to praise roads and inns, and still more to curse them. Friars begged; the motorist commands. How peremptorily will he hail a poor walker from a distance, summon him to the side of the car, bid him tell all that he knows about the way, and then dismiss him with scarcely a "thank-you." These may be only the manners of a few, yet by such abuse of power you know that motorists are masters. The gentlest of men when they begin to drive are raised above those who use the road more slowly; they develop some impatience of walkers and a pronounced animosity for cyclists. I grant one cannot blame them for a thing so natural.

Those who do not drive, but are habitually



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driven, are in more danger of falling into the state or sin of apathy. Some part of this may be, no doubt, illusion. If you view motors chiefly from the outside, as one who is *parcus et infrequens* in the use of them, you well may believe that those who use them always must yield to the same creeping lethargy which invades you after an hour or so in a car. Watched from outside, indeed, the mere contrast between the speed of a car and immobility of its occupants fosters that impression. Yet it cannot be wholly fancy. That recurring look on the faces of the motor-borne, as they pass you on the road, must be more than an imagination. Meeting this "lost" look so often, I feel as though their predicament were like nothing so much as that of Wordsworth's Lucy after death:

No motion has she now, no force,  
She neither hears nor sees,  
Rolled round in earth's diurnal course  
With rocks and stones and trees.

The cars roll on, revolve with the revolving earth, and those inside them should be armoured with a mute insensibility. When a rare gesture breaks this from time to time, it is often pathetically strange, showing it has come out of a deep abstraction. Along a lovely, lonely road, for instance, motor two women. As though with a simultaneous impulse they take out their pocket-mirror and rouge their lips; believe one who has seen them.

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I own to some extravagance about all this, even some insincerity. I have often enjoyed motoring and might, for all I know, become an inveterate motorist as I grow older. A perfect consistency should be required of no one. But to those who suffer, as I often do, from an incubus of motors, I would point out one way of escape for a little. It is not a flight to the mountains or the desert—for nothing tempts motors like a mountain road, and the conquest of the desert is proceeding—but to a flat and civilized country some twelve hours from London. One would wish it were cheaper to go to Holland, but it is satisfying for the purpose mentioned, as for others. The Dutch seem to be a nation still undominated by motors, and they have always been known as a sensible people. I would not go so far as to say that motoring is unknown in Holland, or pretend, indeed, to more than a first impression. But the impression, decisive as far as it went, was that the Dutch are still in the bicycling age—unless a couple of years has perverted them.

One may speculate why it should be thus with so practical, so comfort-loving a people. Not for want of means, certainly; the Dutch are wealthy. Presumably it is because the distances are so short, the land so plentifully channelled with water.

Holland, that scarce deserves the name of land,  
As but the off-scourings of our British sand  
with this and more also, Marvell derided it in

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his war-prompted satire. Those feuds are over, and now Holland appears not so much as the leavings of our island but the larger pattern of our fenland, with an odd blend of amplitude and miniature; the home of pleasant people and delightful pictures. I like to think that a sage wisdom, too, has counselled them not to pelt along.

This, at least, is what may be seen there. Enter the Hague towards midday, and you will be met by a bicycling procession of all ages and both sexes, a stream of people wending noiselessly from their offices to their lunch. The stream is so unbroken that if you wish to cross the road you will have to wait in patience, showing the same deference to these machines that you would to the cars and buses in Piccadilly. The silent supremacy of their riders inspires a kind of awe, and is not indeed without its menaces. Even in Amsterdam, unprepared for a risk which you expect to meet only in some eccentric city like Oxford, you are liable to be run down silently by a bicycle. The things are sudden and persistent and no one rings a bell. That in itself is significant; it shows that the bicycles are masters and that you are expected to know this. But, apart from the hazards, it makes a hush of tranquillity. Perhaps there can be no greater urban quiet except the water-stilled quiet of Venice. And Amsterdam, having canals as well as bicycles, is Venetian at times in its dark russet-coloured way.

As one of the remnant who can still use a bicycle

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with pleasure, I naturally rejoice in this time-arrested state of things. Not that so flat a country can be very stimulating for the pursuit; it would be like perpetually going from Cambridge to Ely and back. To be thrilled in Holland one must skate. But there would be a charm in proceeding over the meadows, paying house-to-house calls, as it were, from one homestead to another, from one town to the next in sight; and it would be the charm of Dutch pictures—the charm of interiors varied with Ruysdael's lights and Koninck's broad skies.

But the real interest is the fitness of this sober progression to the composure of the Dutch. I see in memory those noiseless bicycles and then remember the cars of the Italians, going off with a report like a pistol-shot; men and women clothed in motoring accoutrements, from the helmets to (in the case of the ladies) the high-heeled shoes; and both preferring to speed thus rather than walk or climb. And that, again, suits well with the love of modern Italians for machines, noises and sensations; perhaps even with imperialism on which they have made a late but lively start. A whole philosophy of the nations might be extracted from their tastes in motion, their pastimes and the way in which their notions of freedom are expressed by these.

One may ponder on the English way. The foreigner points, of course, to the discipline in our sports and games. Yet I fancy the ultimate pleasure

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of the Briton is to assert his freedom to the last point by following his own tastes in his own way, and rather preferring not to be known to do what he is doing. I grant that no other country prints so much sporting news and that we have an army of professionals in at least two games. But essentially we are a race of amateurs; and would you realize it, contrast our demeanour on a holiday, however strenuous, with that of a Teuton when he takes to the hills. Observe how the Germans, men and girls—for difference of sex makes no difference in the burden—feel the thing is not complete unless they have loaded their rucksacks till they are like pack-saddles, and the wearer's motion has become a forward stagger rather than a stride. With this must go an ice-axe, even if there is no ice nor the prospect of any, and the pedestrian is only crossing a green hill between two trains. The axe is part of the idea: not a necessity but a badge of glory, and so not to be forgone.

No Englishman would dream of appearing just like that, except for an immediate need. But do not imagine that I think all the advantage is on his side, or wholly condemn the method of the Teutons, though I could not adopt it for an hour. It is profoundly serious—like them. It impels them to cross mountains and abide with nature, and they enjoy both and feel themselves to be strong. They are slaves in order to be free, and if their unvarying burdens seem to us a strange way of getting freedom—well, it is *their* way.

## "FOREKNOWLEDGE ABSOLUTE"

T H E R E are poems and poets that have flourished on being learned by heart. No one, probably, has had an immortality so buttressed in this way as Horace; and apt as he was both for the urbane and the practical, less might have been heard of him in the House of Commons and the clubrooms of the past if he had not been forcibly impressed on the memories of generations of schoolboys. I don't know how much this has to do with poetry. It is quite amusing to learn poetry for oneself, but poetry was nearly always defeated in the pieces I was given to learn, and usually memory. Much depends on the poet and more on circumstances. To cudgel some extremely remote verses into one's brain by evening gas-light and repeat them in the starved hours of early morning, with jerks as of a toy which has been half wound-up, was a harrowing business. That may be why out of quantities of Horace, for instance, so enforced, there remain to me merely some undigested scraps which are meaningless by themselves; and why the first of a few thrills received from him came otherwise. No doubt one did learn the famous ode about Regulus, but in one's sleep, as it were. Anyhow, discovered or re-discovered, the

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demon of quotation compels me to quote it—although it comes from Horace.

As a poet, I suppose, he is artistically great and creatively small; but the end of this ode is a creative moment, a vision of something so clear that one seems to watch it happening. And if it did not happen (for, says Mommsen, the mission of Regulus to Rome "is very ill-attested"), so much the more credit to his imaginativeness. There is the man, like a condemned exile, putting away the embraces of his wife and children and grimly bowing his head to the ground. The Roman was going back to Carthage. Yet he knew that he would die there, and die hideously, for a single phrase suggests this other vision to us: his precise knowledge of what the torturers held in store for him. Then the scene widens in the present; people are crowding to stop him, friends barring his passage, and he waves them aside and goes on his way as he would have done if he had finished speaking in some tedious law case and was making for the country:

tendens Venafranos in agros  
aut Lacedaemonium Tarentum.

And so the scene closes, with a kind of pause in the tranquillity of nature as the rhythm slows and spreads in those leisurely place-names.

But the tragic effect, with its awaited doom and horror, has been clinched by a pair of words—

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*atqui sciebat*—which always come back to me first on thinking of the verses. Regulus knew; and even if the whole thing be fiction, he stands for a rare and dreadful certainty. It was commoner once than it is now.

For most of us, at least in peace, are shielded from such painful certitudes. The victim of neuritis or sciatica may know from the grim past just what his torments will be, but he does not exactly know when they are coming. No, the only torment one generally foreknows is an appointment with the dentist; and how often those dreaded encounters have ended with a reprieve! There remains the final shadow, which may or may not be painful, but will end all the perturbations of our bodies. “We shall all follow, cousin.” But having acknowledged this, as Silence does, or added our gloss like Shallow, we usually break off with something as charmingly inconsequent as Shallow’s query about the price of bullocks at Stamford Fair. And that, perhaps, not entirely because we dislike thinking about death, but because the most certain fact in life is also—mentally—the most uncertain. And so we disregard it.

But that is a tremendous matter, and I did not mean to go so far with Regulus. As a rule we like the certain if it has a tolerable fringe of uncertainty. A pretty safe framework, and let all the details and decorations be left to fancy. A virtual certainty will not offend so long as it is a pleasant



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one. Let it be a fortune, a much-desired country house, or any change of means that offers the glow of contentment. Here, by all the traditions, is something to live for; and, what is hardly less to the point, something that smooths over present acerbities. But now conceive that one or other of these things is going to befall you, say, on 15th May 1935, and that you know this. It would be reassuring to have your certainty underlined and dated, and at the first moment it would certainly be thrilling. Also for the practical business of life it would be a great convenience to know just when the thing was going to happen. Yet after a little a slightly wry taste might steal into your cup of pleasure; and not only because a “glamour” had vanished from it.

Oddly enough, the thing which had been brought so near and clear would by the same act have been transferred outside you. As long as it was an expectation in the large—a sure expectation, even, but unfettered to the last detail—you could have assimilated it, settled into it as into a comfortable suit of clothes and even taken it as an inspiring faith into the fibres of your being. It would have been you; a shred of the personality which weaves these integuments and carries them as marks of identification. Being dated, however, the fact now rises in front of you with an aggressive independence of its own. It has become that tiresome and merciless thing, a fixed event which has not yet happened. And if a mere engagement

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to dinner can chill the expectance of pleasure by a slightly coercive touch, how much more may a certainty that is to change the sequence of one's life. The difference made by knowing it exactly is that you feel you are no longer free.

It may be said that as long as you know the kind of thing which is going to happen, the details do not matter practically. But then so much depends on them: not only one's responsibility in a law court, but the whole palpable reality of life, its beauty and ugliness, hurtfulness or charm exist by means of them, according to the way things happen; and we do not want to have this way imposed on us. About ourselves we cling fondly to some general certainties. We refuse to believe that we shall forge cheques, solicit decorations or run away with our neighbour's wife. We plan careers, and if we want them sufficiently and persistently enough we may achieve something very like them. As they must be imaged to move us, we embellish them with the details of our fancy; but these are not the actual details, and the future commonly makes sport of them. Disraeli “knew” that he would be Prime Minister. But if he had known how late the prize was to come, how it was to come with a full chance to be used only when he was on the brink of seventy, and to be followed afterwards by a crushing defeat which he had no strength to repair—would he have coveted it so eagerly?

But the unknown, with its uncertain margin,

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seems also a pledge of freedom; and there is no right that we reserve more jealously than the right to change—not our plans only, but our interests and our very natures. Yet this is the right which our friends and acquaintances most stoutly deny us. It is altogether natural that they should, for having staked on one kind of person why should they welcome another? But this conservatism can be very mortifying. For our friends, with an insight which seems positively sharpened by affection, have settled the whole thing for us; they know whereabouts we shall be at forty, at fifty, and what our very faces will come to look like. And the inference is that underneath the process we shall always be the same. Secretly, perhaps, this is what we like to think ourselves; the more we change, as the French proverb holds, the more we *are* the same; those flexible shoots are but the mark of an inexhaustible sap within us. But it is one thing to see this as a lively flame and quite another to have it cooled down, as it were, in terms of habits and income. Nobody should really know more about us than we know ourselves, and our friends' anticipation of the facts impinges on our freedom.

The more we know about ourselves, no doubt, the better; and certainly, we should also like to know a little more of what is just going to happen. The veil of obscurity which we walk in is almost transparently thin sometimes. We seem within an ace of grasping something which, if known,



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would make us freer. Nearly everyone has had experiences of this kind, but generally they are rather late and rather trivial. The fore-sense of a letter (not an expected or "crossing" letter) when it was in the post or had just come to the house is one of those which has happened to me fairly often. Once an unexplained depression on the eve of a journey might have saved me, if I could have understood it, from a small but nasty accident. There is nothing very amazing, perhaps, in those things; why should not the much-abused "unconscious" be a little nimbler than the reason in picking up some stray threads out of the web of time? We should like them, in fact, to be still more within consciousness—if they are near enough to be compassed by an immediate act of ours.

But how much do we want to know? When we are told that nothing really valuable in free will can depend on mere ignorance, we feel it is as much as our intelligence is worth to disagree. I remember some striking pages at the end of one of Mr. Bertrand Russell's lectures where he makes the point, and goes on to picture what is really "foreknowledge absolute"—an imagined set of beings who knew the whole future just as well as the past. I am not going to embark on the question of whether they could alter the future by changing their desires and volitions if they saw something unpleasant ahead. If they could, they would be omnipotently free. Indeed, this would be the only

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alternative to a super-stoic resignation. But the imagined beings are wildly remote from us; we even doubt now whether omnipotence can possibly be an attribute of the Creator. There was a play some time ago in which Sir Gerald du Maurier had to struggle ineffectually with the prevision that he would commit a murder; and this, however ghoulish and improbable, was almost nearer to experience.

We might, and perhaps we shall, forecast our futures much better than we do; but the vanishing point of absolute foreknowledge will never be attained, and if it were, would strike with a mortal chill on our mixed natures. Our freedom, though it may be real, can only be used because it has limits. That ineradicable dualism which Samuel Butler, the modern, loved to trace in God and the devil, virtue and vice, appears here with livelier force; wherever you find freedom you find also a *quantum* of necessity. "It is indispensable that we should embrace both, and embrace them with equal cordiality at the same time, though each annihilates the other." And we do embrace them, though always in the name of freedom.

So it is with the known and the unknown; our moods are quite adaptable enough to suit a world of contraries. In one we rejoice in the obscurity of what is going to happen. When we are sick with planning this is a remedy. We have plotted out the weeks, fixed engagements we cannot retreat from, hired the anticipated pleasures of a holiday;

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and with a sudden dismay we contemplate this existence which repeats itself from year to year. Then a shaft of light breaks in; we know so very little of this future. Outlines and blocks of it loom there, but the way it will actually shape and the way we shall take it—the only two things which matter to us as experiencing creatures—are beyond our telling. This is the mood of adventure, and if we could keep it up there would be an exciting novelty in each instant.

But that, again, would be exhausting; and sometimes we recoil upon an opposite mood. It follows on much doing, as a rule, rather than much planning. One feels, with an unexpected relief, that all this flotsam which has been launched into the void has probably an inexorable sequence. We have embarked on novelties and adventures, and all the time we were following the strange logic of our own nature. The roll of cause and consequence unwinds till it is finished and rolled up again and the tale is told; and there is even a solace in thinking it will come to an end, however damning its evidence against us may be. That was the record. “ Things are what they are, and their consequences will be what they will be ” ; that remark of another moralist named Butler, expresses something of the feeling. Again, maybe, we are embracing freedom, only on the other cheek—necessity. Let us call it an act of faith in the consecutiveness of things. That it should alternate with the other mood shows our commendable, or monstrous, versatility.



## TRAVELLERS' JOY

OUT of a large Elizabethan folio tumbles a poetical name, and you may reflect that there is no likelier place that it could drop from. It is Travellers' Joy. That trailing creeper which never knows where to stop, which "foldeth itself upon the hedges and taketh hold and climeth upon everything that standeth neere unto it," might well invade a book; and all self-respecting plants should find their way into a herbal, especially John Gerard's great omnivorous Herball of 1597. The treasure is the name which comes out. Gerard sat working at two tomes of botany, arranging the matter of the learned Dodoens by the method of the learned Lobel—from whom lobelia is christened. He turned a page, and there came the feel and vision of the wayside. There was the prehensile flower with its woody, viny sprays, the leaves like ivy and yet unlike, the fragrant greyish-white blossoms which are so queerly metamorphosed afterwards. And for one author it was the white vine and for another the black vine; and it was Viorna, she who adorneth the ways. A mental spark was lit in Gerard, who did still better. He had seen the thing himself, times out of mind, "decking and adorning waies and hedges, where

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people trauell, and thereupon I haue named it the Trauellers' Ioie."

To name a thing is undoubtedly to help to make it. It becomes (for our obstinately human purview) more real. Only there should be a real name. There is a pleasing shrub called Forsythia, whose title scarcely helps us to reality; it identifies, and then—with all deference to its discoverer—is too personal and too chill. Perhaps it is because one thinks of Mr. Galsworthy's family saga. As for those "Who's Who" names which florists append to new blooms and varieties, they are, of course, mere labels. This is but nicknaming God's creatures, and even though the Marshal Niels and William Allan Richardsons have gained a certain *cachet* with time, I doubt if such titles will ever endear themselves like the "Marquis of Granby" or "General Elliot" on an old tavern sign. By the measure of nature's cycles they cannot be long for this world. When we give a proper name to a whole flower (not a mere variety) we show that it is scarcely proper by disguising it in Latin. In lobelia, I grant, there is a perfect and euphonious fusion.

But nature is nature; this truism we obscurely feel. To christen flowers with humanly personal, accidental designations is to take the edge from that raciness. If you must have a long word, let it have a remote and pungent music, like agrimony. A short name can come much closer to our ways and be approved, if there is some tang of rustic business in it, as with shepherd's bit. Good, also,

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are names like catmint or snakeweed; sudden and secret as the animals. Their fitness may be vague, of course. The suitability of catmint can only be judged by a cat, and not to every eye will the stiffish pink blossoms of the other plant evoke serpentine scales. But these things depend on hidden preferences, and, anyhow, there is a rich proverbial deposit at the bottom of the names.

But there is also a cluster of flower-words which have a human touch because a feeling has lit on them; and their life is not pinned to a chance somebody's, but may be as fresh or universal as nature. Indeed, they are among the best, when the right sentiment or fancy inspires them. They are poetry. Love-in-a-mist, love-lies-bleeding, bleeding heart: there is no resisting the names; they have touched the flower's charm with a wistful beauty, enlarged it for our dreaming. Travellers' joy belongs to these. When Gerard thought of it he was creating as a poet. What does it matter that he lived and died in Holborn and was Master of the Barber-Surgeons' Company? Holborn was not then as it is now, and barber-surgeons exist no longer. He tended Lord Burghley's great gardens, and he had been born in Cheshire. Merely by the word he chose we should guess he had roamed his native hedges. We easily believe (and perhaps it was no more than natural) that when a foreign expert came to visit him and they went out together to hunt for the "rarest simples," Gerard invariably found four to the Frenchman's one.

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Yet the name may seem a little odd when it is coolly regarded. Why so much enthusiasm? The herbalist says himself that while the flower blooms in July, "the beautie thereof appears in November and December." It has then passed into the wholly different though endearing senescence of Old Man's Beard. But in spring or summer, as we track the lanes or diverge across meadows, we can think of a score of flowers which dart a livelier thrill of beauty. Our swifter pace, our larger range of travel provide more glowing excitements. In the song of the mounting lark, says Meredith, there is a "shout of primrose banks"—and very likely you have fancied it his hyperbole. Keats must be truer, surely, with "the quiet primrose," which, save for heaven and a few ears, is to be the only listener to a poet's song. But in early spring-time one escapes from London for a day or two; still stiff, as it were, with winter and the streets; and as the train speeds or the car rushes—there, amazingly soon, is a bank starred with primroses, and they utter a cry almost as you do. Meredith is right; that was positively the phrase and actually the thing. A clarion note comes from the primroses, and though it is soundless and they are small it exhilarates like Purcell's Trumpet Voluntary. Triumphantly the blithest of spring flowers announce that life has begun again.

A little later, and more exotic joys await the wanderer who goes abroad. The grass of Alpine pastures is strewn with blue gentians, diapered

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with little armies of wild violas—yellow, purple, white or tricolour—each massed in companies of their own hue. Nature, loving a pattern, has devised it so. But the white anemones perched on the slopes are more inspiring and unpredictable. How odd that the frail and wilting anemones of our copses should share the name with those tall upstanding flowers, whose flaky, velvety whiteness is so crisp with life. They will throng the steepest slopes, and are finest there; where, as you climb, the stems and blossoms are above as well as round you and make a sort of transparent grove, the light throwing back that faint green tinge which is an afterthought in the intense whiteness.

But this may be a glory that one has come out to see, and the rarest delight must still be that which catches you unawares. It is the find of an uncommon treasure, or a radiance of flowers where one expected a void. So, coming down from a mountain in September, and passing the bare grassy slopes, I came to a wood from which all the summer seemed gone. Autumn carpeted the ground, at least, with its colours; it was in the red of the bilberry plants, the red-stained leaves of crane's-bill and the yellowing bushes. But against that ruddy carpet and the green of the sparse pines there were suddenly flashes of blue. There was no mistaking the deep dark blue of those gentians, the tall stalks bushed towards the top with rough, pointed leaves. They were—let us shirk the last syllables of the Latin and call them the *Asclepiads*

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They are stalwart among gentians, flourishing high up, and late; their look of strength enhanced by the way each pair of blooms springs from between a pair of leaves, and all forming, as the books say pleasantly, "a long leafy raceme." And then they gather in small troops. So it was here. The flowers rose from the autumnal floor with an air of motion in them; and as they hovered in a troop, bending their tall heads a little from the straight lissom stalks as though in quest of something, they seemed—it is an absurd image but it compelled itself—like a group of miniature giraffes. They were hunting for forage among the reddened leaves. Next minute they would be moving on. And the rich dark blue of the Asclepiads, their high-quivering poise, their curious look of flitting were as a draught of life among the dying leafage.

Thus joys are lavished on the traveller while the undistinguished plant named after him climbs over the hedges at home. John Gerard, too, had seen exciting things. He had been in Scandinavia and Russia, where nature may be less gorgeous, but is doubtless strange. But what he dedicated to travellers is the common roadside trailer. So hedges lined the ways then, and wayfarers did not hurry; they journeyed, they actually travelled, from shire to shire. The pace was slower and there was time to look. They went afoot or at best on horseback, or more lumberingly in wagons which ground along the ruts. Whether they looked at

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flowers in the hedges or not, and even if they would have been rather amazed at our eagerness over quite common things, they were in their gestures and behaviour, in the rate of their movement, more a part of nature than we are now.

Autumn came on; the roads grew heavier and fewer people were on journey. The flower, meanwhile, turned into something else. But the time when it changes, though there may be a chill about, is a time to saunter along lanes. There is a rare gold in the paler sunlight; and in the rural country such a stillness, a suspense of the last riches, that it would be a profanity to walk too fast. As you stroll, numberless little eyes of old man's beard, lost in their streams of white elf-locks, regard you quizzingly. What a lusty age it has, that it should spill this flood of woolly fleeces all over the hedges, more assertive now than when it was in flower. It has achieved two names, one lyrical, one racy; but the strangest thing is this ebullient old age. What a lesson to "Dorothy Perkins," for instance, as of strength to a simpering futility! The end of that climber of pergolas is a sad confession, a cheap prettiness exposed in the dingiest decay.

But whether travellers should be comforted by the last impersonation of their name-flower I hardly know. Its old age, however vivid, may rather suggest the bourne from which no traveller returns. All the same, there is a fitness in this queerly manifested after-life, beginning when the first, the life of the blossom, is over. Even so, in

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the recesses of our minds, travels only begin when they are ended. The turmoil of sensations and agitations is appeased; the eyes are no longer busy; and then suddenly the café on the piazza, the valley in the mountains, build their colours and shadows in the mind. With calm but refreshing persistence, they will come again. And those crumpled rose-leaves of a journey, such as the hardness of Italian pillows or the billowy incubus of Germanic beds, are now as supportable and possibly endearing as the foibles of absent friends and relatives. The worst moments are almost entirely forgotten. For although Johnson may have been right in thinking that our sufferings are more acute than our joys, yet pleasure lives in memory as pain does not. Some things, of course, cannot repeat themselves: the actual kiss of the sun, the discoveries, the surprises. You may say these were the best, and it is true. But the image-life has one quality that was doubtful in the surrender to impressions; it is our own.

For man will still be making, whether the materials come of themselves or not. With a hope, a memory, a gleam of fancy he tinges things present and absent until they become his. A wayside plant could not be left outside. He would not have it in the garden, but he created a new pleasure with its name.



## AN AFTERNOON IN THE MARSHES

MY last afternoon in the marshes was a greyish one, not seeming to promise very much. But there is no knowing what may come of an afternoon—of an hour, even—and this proved more enthralling than any of the others. There was a curious balance in the air. It would have been wrong to say the place was briskly animated, and just as wrong to say that it was torpid. It had merely halted, on the near side of sleep, and was alive with a sort of vital quietness. The whole stretch of land hung gently under the movement of the sky; and although the sky was grey, it was luminous and without density, and rolled its cloud-edges lightly over the bank which divides the marshes from the sea.

The clouds sailed nimbly up with the wind; and then, without ruffling the flat levels below, they went off together into vacancy. And all that stirs or changes seemed to have been dissolved into them, for as they went they carried away the last shreds and suggestions of time. Time vanished, and was outside there now, beyond the sea-bank; it was in the oscillations of the sea, brimming a full cup to the beaches and then withdrawing it

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again. But no sigh or sound of the waves reached across the barrier, and the solitary quietness was undisturbed.

There was no magic of flowers on these salt-marshes then, and they were never radiant unless their channels were reflecting the blue and white of the sky. But just as the colours of flowers are defined against greyness, so the outline of things here and certain colours were defined and, as it were, eternalized on this neutral afternoon. The watery inlets gleamed like old silver, subdued but incorrupt. The greyish-green hue of the grass was not like a flowering of one season, but an enduring garment of the earth. Even the herons, silhouetted on these pale miniature lagoons, looked unchangeable. One only saw their essential motions, so few and deliberate that the birds hardly seemed to move.

If a fisherman seen in the distance looks mysterious, how much more a fishing heron. The tall birds seemed poised in an endless contemplation, absorbed and yet spectacular, like great birds of bronze from Eastern art. Each was one with its inverted likeness in the water, so that the bird was only half of an unbroken curve that began with the living form and ended on another plane of appearance—that, too, as real as life because the whole was indivisible. When their serpentine necks bent forwards there was something dateless in the rhythm of the act. Then a trio of them advanced in a row, repeating the same gestures;

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and what you saw was not so much the movement as the order of it all.

And everything else seemed to be planted out of the reach of change. The squat tower on the sea-bank looked as if it had grown there. Unquestionably someone had made it, but that must have happened before the days when buildings were recklessly dropped into nature. It combined with the waterways and the stretches of grass and the birds in an enchanted stability, too rare to be mistaken for assertive fact. The marshland had become a country of dream, cool and fine as one of those silvery landscapes imagined by Patinir or some other early master.

But if you measured by the world of time, this eternal semblance melted. Whether you looked into the past or the future, you were betrayed. The lifting of the curtain—that thick and gusty curtain of importunate fact—was a mere hazard of mood and weather and the last few hours of a waning day. The herons would soon be on the wing again, cleaving their way inland with broad, flapping strokes. And so at the other end of things; this scene, with its ancient and even timeless look, was really new. The water-mirrors expanding into miniature lakes, the stalking herons and fluttering sea-birds would not have been seen just in that way a few years back. They were a gift of chance, an irruption of time in the guise of the sea, which had crashed through the embankment, flooded the levels and remained. It was wonderful,

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though, how the birds had made the place their own and how freely they swarmed there, within a few yards of the road and almost at point-blank from a gun. Swiftly and abidingly they found the oasis out, and went to and fro in it as if it were their capital, under men's eyes and still remote. In the evenings there was an extraordinary clangour of birds, and a great congregation of them. What Hudson calls "a carpet of birds" would cover one of the dry spaces, making a wonder, in a small way, like one of his South American marvels, only that instead of the scarlet-breasted uniform of his military starlings, there was the homely plumage of the English bird. The starlings, no doubt, would always have come there, but the herons and the throng of sea-birds had been drawn by the invading water. And that, too, was a matter of time and counted hours. When I left the place next morning in a brilliant early sunlight, there were no more pools and channels flashing back the blue of the sky. The high tides had gone and most of the marsh had reverted to a dry, green level.

That thick little tower, broad rather than high, which seemed planted on the embankment like the base of a donjon, was something of an imposture too. It belonged to the place and completed it, as the fantastic stump of a castle like Dunstanburgh rises out of the ground and is an image of sheer solitude. But it was only a rocket tower, less than a generation old. When people

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build in Norfolk they have a feeling still for the right material, which is the convenient material to hand; and so the tower was made with those grey flints and red-brick dressings which please one's eye in the old farm-houses and cottages. With these and the way it capped the ground it looked extremely old and rooted, and yet as time goes it was a late comer on the coast.

But Norfolk has such a generous breadth and reality that it can afford to be generous in the matter of illusions, and even of ghosts. Not many miles from this place is Burnham Thorpe, where Nelson was born. The church stands away from the village on a slope of pasture, with some hoary farm-buildings under its graveyard wall. It is large, luminous and beautiful, a place of clear vision and still memory; one might imagine the child's intuitions taking wing there out of the apathy of a Sunday afternoon. Across the grass is the only neighbour of the church, a square, satisfying, reddish-grey Georgian house, looking along fields towards the village, with a streamlet creeping from behind like a moat and a screen of tall trees on one side. Of course, that must be *the* house, for out of such broad-beamed rectories the sons of adventure shoot forth; and Nelson must have been born behind one of those windows. But it is another illusion. The rectory stands elsewhere, and has been rebuilt since; and the church, when he sat there under his father, was boarded up with high pews and partitions, so that instead of an airy

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clearness it may have had more of the dimness of a cockpit. There is something grimly right and predestined about that, but the other instant and beguiling visions are fancies and no more. The real past is like this—like the disconcerting fact: closer in one way and more distant in another. It ignores the coming legend and is less like what we imagine than what we are.

Other illusions, however, seem to join on to the past exactly; they reach a higher reality as ghosts. All about these countrysides lurk the ghosts of men who loved them and painted them. The country itself only seems to extend their pictures into a dimension one can touch. It abounds in potential Cromes and Cotmans. They start to mind at the sight of an old farmhouse rounded with a Jacobean gable at the side; at the barns and hayricks where the white road makes a turn, the windmill on a slope of heathy common, and boats drawn up and lazily sleeping on their sides in a harbour inlet. Time and again one sees nothing that those painters might not have seen, and it would hardly seem odd to find them alive in the body there and scrutinizing the place. Crome might be there now, just as he looks out from his portrait in Norwich, sturdily and darkly independent—a far darker and more gipsyish face than Borrow's. He harvested it all so safely in his pictures that it really does not matter if omnibuses now run to Mousehold Heath. But if one delights in those pictures and then finds, in the actual, such

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a Crome-like scene unchanged, it is as though some of the eternity in the painting had stolen into the place and kept it fair.

On this silvery afternoon the marshes offered a small draught of eternity, and it would have been fatuously ungrateful to spurn it because of any impediment in the facts. These, calmly regarded, were themselves as illusive and transient as a "fact" may be. What is a date, after all, in that perpetual struggle and interchange of sea and land; and what is the contest itself but a point between some vast pre-history and future history? It was only by an afterthought that one remembered such things. The mood of the place and hour dissolved these obstructions away, and more insistent things vanished with them. The whole shredded chaos of one's mechanised existence, its work and its meals and the clamour of news about people one has never heard of, melted like the dream which they very possibly are. For it would have been graceless and untrue to a suddenly awakened feeling to believe that what effaced all this was itself a dream. It was dream-like in its strangeness and immaterial fineness, but no dream whispers, like this, that it will last.

The secret, apparently, was that it was always there, like an undivined country or existence waiting a chance to be revealed. We call these fortunate chances "moments," and our visions barely maintain themselves beyond one concentrated instant, nor did mine; but the instants returned

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and were renewed, for it was a mark of that generous afternoon that the moments stretched to hours. This was all so continuous that instead of my imagining it, the place seemed to be imagining, or imaging itself. And that may be what one means by the spirit of a place, as though an obscure presence grew conscious now and then and traced its real lineaments and meaning under our eyes.

Nothing else, at all events, would express the intent awareness in its peace. This, although mysterious, offered no vague or clouded mystery. The firm horizontal lines, sculpture-like birds and gleaming lengths of water on one side, and the incomparable little village on the other rising up to a church of which all the shapely strength was visible, were so much clear form. It is a hard thing for a marshland landscape to manage, and I had seen no other which achieved it. Those I had been exploring merged in the indefinite, and often hinted at something baleful underneath. This baleful something revealed itself as mud. The clinging ooze was like a snake under the grass; there was little sea lavender to colour the marshes, and their space was often narrowed by heavy, hazy skies. Yet each tract of them had its own physiognomy. There were drier stretches dotted over with horses and cattle who roamed about in a primitive and exhilarating freedom. At times a white sail lifted itself above banks and grasses, threading its way along a channel to the sea or back to harbour again. If there was nothing else in the



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distance there were the sand-hills and hummocks barring an invisible fringe of foam beyond, or the hulk of a wreck looming at the edge of flatland.

A lurid enough day just there, with massed, inky rain-clouds, would recall that amazing marsh-landscape at the beginning of "Great Expectations." But only for a minute, because it is not this region's way to have a passionately dramatic air. Dickens' passion must have sprung out of himself much more than out of any scene he remembered, and yet every detail of that picture of his is so real and visible that it almost drives you to a map. Then one remembers it must have been a long way from north Norfolk, since Pip walked thence in a day to London. And the difference of spirit is even greater, really, than the distance of miles. However the gales may whistle over these other northland marshlands, some human agitations are laid to rest there. Swinburne is getting nearer to the place and the temper of it:

Slowly, gladly, full of peace and wonder  
Grows his heart who journeys here alone.  
Earth and all its thoughts of earth sink under  
Deep as deep in water sinks a stone.  
Hardly knows it if the rollers thunder,  
Hardly whence the lonely wind is blown.

Indeed, the vacant quietness may pulse so slowly, so faintly that it seems to pass into inanition or beyond, justifying his evocation:

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Here is Hades, manifest, beholden!  
Surely, surely here, if aught be sure!

But after all one cannot summon Anticleia and the rest to this hard-bitten coast. Swinburne gives it up, declares it to be ghostless. Certainly no classic ghosts will come here, but on some night of piping wind I do not feel so sure about the spirits of the north—spirits of the great sailors who were born close to this shore: Nelson on one side, Narbrough the other, and in this very place Sir Christopher Myngs, the valiant and forgotten. But that afternoon, however magical, was not one for ghosts. Its quiet suggested a depth of rarer life; not a stirring of dust but its transmutation into something finer.

Was it a result of the light, the symmetrical place, one's own mood—in fact of everything there? There was the just perceptible trace of a Sunday afternoon. But somehow its torpor was absent, and the villagers who showed themselves presently on the road did not look as constrained and listless as Sunday strollers usually do. Perhaps the distance, not too far or too near, had something to do with it. Anyhow these loiterers were subtilized as the herons had been, and the grazing cows.

But what really suggested some magic was that motor-cars themselves submitted to this influence in the air. The place was not innocent of motors. Behind the marsh, under the sloping village, the

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coast-road sweeps in on a gentle curve and goes off to look for the next habitations round the headland. It comes from watering-places, well-known "resorts," and the visitors had come out for a run through the sea-wilderness in their cars. Less than three hundred yards away they rolled into the scene and rolled out of it, impinging at least on the corner of one's eye. And yet it made no difference. They had become as unreal and soundless as the tiny models of themselves that manœuvre slowly in a London shop-window. It seemed as though they were exempt from hurry and were performing one ceaseless and even virtuous act. How many of their occupants felt that they had emerged into the rarest of places it was impossible to guess; one would have liked to think they knew. But if they so absorbed it the action left no trace; the visible thing was that the place absorbed them.

Just for a moment, as I saw them gliding along the road, and then looked back to the horizontal lines seaward, I was invaded by a nightmare thought—that all existence, here or hereafter, was simply motion along an endless line. It was a sign of the way in which everything, just there and then, seemed to have been gathered into an eternal Present. But it vanished like the illusion that it was. For it must be an illusion and a fallacy to apply the space of geometry—and the time of weariness—to a state which by its mere definition excludes those things. And, except for this moment's invasion, they seemed excluded then. That

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was why I could have wished the afternoon as perpetual as it seemed to be, and the transfigured look of things—too insistent for dreaming—to last.

There is something ridiculous, no doubt, in saying that one can feel a kind of timeless beatitude "now" or "then." But to the eyes of logic we are nearly always ridiculous beings. It is part of our duality—a duality apparently not confined to us but extending over the universe of things, since it is by hazards of an hour or a moment that these "intimations" of a timeless order pierce through. Time is their master, but only to show us how it can be supplanted. As Richard Jefferies said of such an experience, "haste not, be at rest, this Now is eternity." And though not pretending to more than the semblance of such a realization, one borrows his words. Even if it was mere imagination, mere appearance, is one much the worse? But that afternoon the whole suggestion of the place was that it had reached some new reality. The sense of being so near to something unseizable was almost gone. The marshland in its clear stillness was evoking

that white Island, where  
Things are evermore secure;  
Candour here, and lustre there  
Delighting——

as though some sentience in its acres grasped it in  
advance of my own.

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But time flowed in again; there is no holding the door ajar. A wind got up and bustled over the marshes, shivering their trance. I also began to shiver and made for shelter behind an angle of the rocket tower. The sun came out with the wind, and no doubt most people felt it was a cheerfully fine evening after a rather pallid day. But as I watched by the tower the sun only put a steely gleam into the water below, and after the silent afternoon the beating of the waves was a meaninglessly iterated sound—the monotony of time and change. As for the wind, I had struggled home against it too often along that coast-road to greet it with much enthusiasm. But this evening its fangs were drawn by the experience of the afternoon, which went with me as a presence as real as the wind.

It was a question, that evening, of packing for an early start next day, and among other matters, of settling the bill. Then I became aware of a ghastly vacancy. I had lost a five-pound note. What was more, I had lost it since the beginning of the afternoon.

I need not dwell on the pitiable figure one cuts on these occasions; the reproaches or condolences from without (mingled with a natural anxiety on the part of one's landlord), and the sense of proved incompetence within. But this time there was a further and unfamiliar sting. It was a sense of hollow betrayal in the midst of beatitude, a crack in the golden bowl of those delightful hours. How

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ruthless was the grip of facts and exigencies, tightening secretly just as one felt an absolute escape! I was in no mood to mark the humour of it, or to reflect that if one was enjoying the impalpable world one could hardly expect tolerance from the other. But I could not charge myself with any other crime. All I remembered about the note in the afternoon was resisting the temptation to use it as a book-marker. •

The next morning was radiant, a cheque had been cashed, and I felt better. Because it was so fine, and in a dim hope that the lost slip of paper might be nestling somewhere under the tower, I went round by the longer coast-road to the station, which lay some miles inland. The marsh looked very blithe now; it was no longer a recess of solitude, but merged in all the wide-stretching sea and land, gleaming under the blue and flecked with dancing cloudlets. But the wind which was driving me had blown strong all night, and only a stone could have ignored its vivacity. There was no chance for a slip of paper. When I reached the tower on the sea-bank, it was scouring every corner. The bank-note, manifestly, was in the North Sea; and this was such a foregone conclusion that I accepted it calmly.

When I unpacked my luggage a day or two later, a hundred miles away, I had forgotten all about the note. And then there was a miracle. From the first pair of boots that I unwrapped, it fluttered towards me—as complete a surprise as

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if I had been presented with a new one. And so to all intents and results, it was; a supererogatory gift and glory. What mattered now my stupidity in mislaying it when it was wanted? All was for the best, in a way that might have contented Pangloss. My afternoon was finally corroborated. The bank-note, most unlikely of messengers, seemed to be repeating the secret of the marshland. "Why," it asked, "be so doubtful and disquieted? All was exactly as you saw. There are outlets which are no dream, but are secure, where the arrows of chance and calamity cease flying for a little; and this was one of them."

## THE QUARTERS

T H E R E are ways innumerable of dividing mankind into two races. Charles Lamb exhibits them as borrowers and lenders, giving a royal supremacy to the first. Even these are not exhaustive classes, for there must be a still, small clan who follow the maxim neither to borrow nor lend. But they, too, may have a secret leaning towards one abyss or the other. Perhaps the closer you look to fundamentals the less you can draw an absolute line. Cling, therefore, to the surface; you may see the depths parting transparently underneath.

By trivialities you will know them. There are the people who insure against things and the people who do not insure. There are those who by faith take only the nastiest medicines, and those who (by faith also) only take the nicest. Some people, when they go abroad, find an indispensable joy in travelling more luxuriously than they would dream of at home. Others gravitate promptly to the thirds or fourths. And there is a cleavage on the importance of meals.

The last word reminds me of something which is not too large to mention. It is the time at which we fix our meals. Obviously the most emphatic, easily remembered time is that which clangs out



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the stroke of an hour. I speak without book, but I fancy that as you come to the ages when people really dined—omitting the dim past when they ate naturally, without clock—you find them sitting down at some decisive time like three or four. Greek or Roman precedents might be valuable, but I am unsure about them. Eventually the consecrated hour became eight, or (in very august circles) nine.

Nothing, however, stands alone, and there grew up besides and by degrees a propensity towards the half-hours. No doubt this seemed a falling away, an omen of the mingled laxity and strenuousness and complicatedness of civilization. It may have shaken the paramountcy of meals a little, and struck insidiously at Abstract Time. It was certainly the result of trying to make these things more convenient. But if you look at the face of the clock you cannot say that anything is very wrong. The half-hour is in the same straight line as the hour; it wields a delegated authority.

But much graver is a further change which has come with the ages. This is the habit of admitting mere quarters of an hour to the same control over our lives as is enjoyed by the hours and half-hours. And the real point of cleavage I was going to mention is the division between those who encourage this and those who do not. I grant that when you look into the facts (as someone invariably does) you will not find even here, perhaps, an entirely undeviating consistency. For there are

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people who dine, let us say, at a quarter to eight, but in their other repasts abjure these fractions. Indeed, that particular choice may have no inherent significance. It may simply mean that you must be in time for eight, as a quarter past eight may allow you to be late for that hour. Hence the phrase, of course, of "a quarter to eight *for* eight."

But more lies behind; for again there are people—and they are in a class to which, happily or unhappily, I belong, and which may be more numerous than I know—who are fatally and unconsciously impelled towards these quarters of an hour. So that in the end these usurp the place of the primary hours. I can give no adequate reason why anybody should breakfast at a quarter to nine, lunch at a quarter past one, dine at a quarter to eight—and perhaps even have drunk tea at a quarter to five. Coolly viewed, it looks an insanity; yet there are stranger acts which pass uncertificated. Indeed, there may be a reason which made each of these times the most advisable and practical. But I have forgotten what it was, and with a time-table like that the most plausible excuses could be received only with a smile. No producible reasons will cover the whole case. Somewhere, therefore, lurks a peculiarly vital one. It must be a really genuine necessity: one of those which impel you, not from without, but from within. Here, perhaps, as when you take a railway-ticket or a "mixture," you may see yourself as in a glass, and who knows what deeps may be reflected in the mirror?

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Yet to see oneself is difficult. It is hard to say why an exception should have become the rule. Perhaps it will be said that there is something niggling in this devotion to the smaller fractions. But what, exactly, does that mean? A quarter is certainly smaller than a half, yet more so than a whole; but if a man who breakfasts at a quarter past eight should be charged with being a precisian, he may surely and justifiably retort this charge against those who breakfast sternly at eight. Perhaps few people sit down at this particular quarter except those who are overdue for the earlier hour. But a quarter to nine, which is very prevalent, suggests at once that a genial latitude is the method in this madness. You stray indulgently between the borders of half-past eight and of nine. A brisk punctuality will show that your thoughts are running on the time-saving virtue of the former; a slight procrastination, that you are dallying with the ease of the last.

Such behaviour may be a sign that one is cursed with an undecided nature. The act seems to convict you. Faced with the two obvious alternatives, you have simply split the difference and, as it were, declined to choose. "Shall we make it half-past eight or nine?" "Well, why not a quarter to nine?"—is a domestic interchange that must often have happened, and it may mean, of course, the worst. But though a prejudiced witness, I doubt if sheer indecision accounts for it all. The plain fact is that you have arrived at a compromise,

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which is exactly how hard-headed people get on in the world. It means the best of both worlds here, a finger in both pies. That quarter of an hour is just what one chooses to make it—a last oblivion under the bed-clothes, a priceless morsel of work-time, a cigarette in an armchair.

There is something in this attitude of the devotees of "quarters" that will appeal to any really generous mind. They dislike rules. Possibly they have been haunted by them; they remember an inexorable summons on the stroke of the hour. This ghost is exorcized at last. The irresolute may find a harmless refuge among them, for doubtless they include many who cannot make up their minds. But in the main, I think, they are more indifferent than irresolute; they renounce faith in the peremptory hours. There is one thing, however, on which they neither doubt nor waver, and this is their instinct to get all the advantages—of the fixed and the indefinite, being late and being punctual, time and no-time. This may seem, perhaps, an immoral spirit, but is it not a contribution to the art of life? It appears to work, and really with no inconvenience to others, except an unnoticeable tax on the memory of one's friends.

In such a trifle as breakfast at a quarter to nine there may be, indeed, a perception of true values. Unceasingly the best minds tell us that the best things are independent of time. But just when we rise to this high argument we are dragged back by the hypnotism of clocks. Their measurements

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mean little to us, we may say in a reflective hour; and, indeed, time is so elastic that one's sense of it, as often as not, is ludicrously at variance with that register. But there stands the clock, ticking off our little day. What can be done? It is of no more use to break the clock, perhaps, than any other machine, but we may lighten our servitude. And this habit of the quarters, surely, is a move towards freedom, a blow far more insidious and telling at the clock's supremacy than any abasement of the hours, its warders, to the level of their satellites the half-hours. This sub-dividing is *pour rire*. Under a mask of specious exactitude it reduces the whole thing to a joke.

Thereby it has a value of its own. For one cannot realize too plainly that the clock, whatever it was in the beginning, has become the enemy of time. It was always an inconstant measurer, as everyone who travels beyond a certain radius discovers. And now we know. In vain Big Ben sends out its pathetic signals, wafting them to far-buried hamlets at ten p.m. That really does not impose any more. Too many other signs assure us that this absolute Time, of which the clock was a faith-cherished image, is drifting to the lumber-room in company with absolute and immutable Space. Even when we believed in it, Greenwich and Mid-Europe could never agree. And now we are offered instead of it a real time which is the time of our consciousness, and is pliantly and beautifully adjusted to the pliancy of things. You say it does not

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make the least difference. I regretfully own, too, that it has not changed my existence yet. But who knows how far, in a century or less, the fourth dimension may have sunk into our lives?

Meanwhile, we wander between two worlds. In vain every labour-saving instrument assures us that we have gained a little time. We secretly know that we have lost it. Its crystal sources lie buried—where? Perhaps under the ruins of our youth; certainly under the conveniences of the age we live in. These, with their smiling treachery, are the abductors of time. How dreadfully we want it back; the mere bravado of our disparagements of it, our sighs for eternity, shows that we want a great deal more. The brief procession of days and nights would be long enough—or nearly—if we could really take it in. The clock is the chief enemy to one's doing this; for how eternal seems any clock-less, watch-less day:

as long

As twenty days are now.

Therefore one should, as far as possible, ignore the clock. It is only this mechanical reminder which turns speed into hurry and makes repose too short or too long. As we realize that time is what we choose to make it, perhaps time will flow back into our hands. A clock's face will be as shorn of terrors as those grinning idols from dark places which we observe unquaveringly in a museum. They were fed, once, with human bones.

## A COSMOPOLITAN PARSON

IN the Middle Marches of the Border lies a large moorland parish called Elsdon. Once it was still larger than it is now, for two other parishes have been carved out of it since the eighteenth century. But the world of the hills seems boundless there. With falls and climbs, but always sweeping upwards, they stretch north to the high places of the Border—a wilderness of long sheep-walks, and rounded tops. Names seem superfluous, but they have them; there is Windygate, with a gusty feel in it, and Beef Stand for the spoils of the old reivers; while from a last platform the Roman camp, *Ad Fines*, looks down over Scotland. From a high point above Elsdon may be seen all the heavens of the “white” moors, as they call them, the hoary dappled Cheviots; while over against these to the south are the “black” moors of gritstone and heather.

It is a parish of sheep-walks and scattered farms, in which Elsdon village is a sort of oasis. From the moors you drop to green slopes and levels and a meeting of burns. After the bareness trees seem plentiful; in fact all that you see of the village at some distance appears to be a castle in a grove. This is really the rectory, with an unusually tall pele-tower for its nucleus. The church

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is close by, with a queer bell-turret and a garth full of dark, leaning gravestones; and beyond the trees rises a pair of big grass mounds, probably the works of a Norman stronghold. In front of all this the village green stretches invitingly, sloping gently down towards the united waters of the burns. Two short rows of houses face each other across the green, one or two are sprinkled beyond, and that is the village. There is a generous air of spaciousness, a simple dignity and beauty.

None of the houses on the green look younger than the eighteenth century, although probably none are much older. Survival was difficult in that harried land. But all that stands there looks as if it stood by its own right. There is no subservience about the village. The very geese, donkeys and horses stray over the common with a refreshing air of independence. In the people there is the real Northumbrian independence, with its reserve and its genuine kindness and hospitality underneath. They do not trouble about strangers, for Elsdon has never been quite as far out of the world as it seems, but has known many comings and goings on the road, and been, in its way, a metropolis of the moors. Here when the snow fell, they say, the farmers and small lairds used to come in from miles round and drink and dice for weeks together. As if in memory of those days there is a squat, obese and piping figure carved in stone above the lintel of one of the houses. It is "the Bacchus": verily a northern one.



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The region has a pastoral sweetness. You may enjoy it until the little white roads over the hills entice you to depart with them, or the winds expel you. For they search you out even in high summer, and one would not choose to winter in "cold Elsdon." This is how the Rev. C. Dodgson, rector here in the middle of the eighteenth century and afterwards a bishop in Ireland, described his winter:

There is not a single tree or hedge now within twelve miles to break the force of the wind; it sweeps down like a deluge from hills capped with everlasting snow, and blasts almost the whole country into one continued barren desert. The whole country is doing penance in a white sheet, for it began to snow on Sunday night, and the storm has continued ever since. It is impossible to make a sally out of the castle to make my quarters good in a warmer habitation. I have lost the use of everything but my reason, though my head is entrenched in three night-caps, and my throat is fortified with a pair of stockings twisted in the form of a cravat. As washing is very cheap, I wear two shirts at a time; and for want of a wardrobe, hang my greatcoat upon my own back. . . . The manner in which a herd (shepherd) lived upon the moors, especially in winter, would draw tears to your eyes when described in the most simple manner.

## A COSMOPOLITAN PARSON

He lay, he says, between two beds in the parlour, so as not to be frozen to death; in the kitchen the curate and his wife lay in one little bed, and Margery, the maid, in another joining it. Underneath the kitchen was a low stable where the cattle were penned at night; this is now the drawing-room of the rectory-castle.

Mr. Dodgson's verve is excellent, but in the matter of language he was probably astonished at his own moderation. He might have been yet more astonished if he had known who was to be his successor in that gaunt tower, those stretches of moorland.

Even in that age of odd clerical preferments he could hardly have guessed it would be a Frenchman. Nor that Louis Dutens, although French-born and in the orders of the Church of England, would be acting as His Majesty's *Chargé d'Affaires* in our Legation at Turin when he was provided with a cure of souls at Elsdon.

The web of circumstance which linked him and these things together was certainly of the queerest. As the journey which led him here is the most curious part of his life one can do no less than glance at it. The life of the Rev. Louis Dutens invites side-glances. Success was probably his ruling motive, but he achieved it by digressions. He travelled much, literally as well as figuratively. When he gathered up the threads of his life to write his own story he called it "*Mémoires d'un Voyageur qui se repose*": "*Memoirs of a Traveller*

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now in retirement," as the English version has it. I turned to them when I had grown fond of the village and discovered this singular figure who had once been rector there.

When he was a youth in Touraine, Louis Dutens could never have guessed that his religion would be of the slightest worldly use to him. As a Huguenot he was barred from the professions. There was always commerce; but he was one of those sons who revolt from the business of their fathers. There was literature, and he had a nimble turn for verse; a tragedy of his was even produced at Orleans, but he felt he had no depth or perseverance for great writing. Lively, sociable and ingenious, he fluttered about, had love-affairs which were cut short, made attempts on Paris which failed for lack of money. Suddenly, when the ways seemed closed, another blow fell: the Archbishop of Tours swooped on the family and shut up his youngest sister in a convent.

Evidently there was no living in the country of the Most Christian King. But England was the land of freedom and he had an uncle there, prosperously established as a merchant in London. Still he wanted something more than that, and Providence favoured him, for before long who should arrive as visitors in Tours but Miss Betty Pitt, sister of the most rising English statesman, and a certain beautiful Miss Taylor? Dutens at once got introductions to them through their

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bankers, and was a pleasing cicerone. He admired Miss Pitt and adored Miss Taylor, and was presently off to England with letters introducing him to Mr. Pitt and Lord Barrington. A brief intimacy with the great Commoner was the most remarkable thing that happened to him on this visit. Mr. Pitt was very gracious. Dutens often went to see him, and Pitt insisted on seeing all the young Frenchman's poetry—showed him, even, some of his own. As he was Paymaster-General then, and relatively muzzled in politics, he had all the more time for the Muses. But there came an awful and inexplicable day when his door was closed to Dutens. Louis heard all about it from Miss Taylor when she came back; Miss Pitt had been meeting the Dutens family in France, and there was a misunderstanding and a quarrel.

His only consolation was to fall deeper in love with Miss Taylor, and in many fervent interviews he improved his knowledge of English. But this first attempt in London was worsted; he had to retire to France until his uncle in Leicester Fields summoned him back with news of an opening.

Something modest but invaluable then befell him. He became tutor to the son of a Mr. Wyche, who lived simply and yet in the best style both in town and in the country. They were delightful people, and Mr. Wyche was a serious student. Dutens was in difficulties as a tutor; he had small stock of Latin and was obliged to get up at dawn and recover it secretly. Mr. Wyche solved the

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problem by teaching the tutor. With patience and clearness he explained the Greek and Latin authors to Dutens, and so fired him with a zeal for learning that he went on to Hebrew, Italian and Spanish. For three happy, uneventful years he drank in the pleasures of scholarship and letters: pleasures which followed him through life and coloured his final choice in the manner of living. One can see their results in the pages of the British Museum catalogue, mixed with other excursions of his—for he was always desultory—and on the whole they are more inquisitive than important; yet his taste for study is an agreeable offset to his courting of "the great," which was a more ruling passion. But he was sensitive in feeling. There is a curious story of his pupil, a delicate, eager boy, passionately attached to the young tutor, who succumbed to illness—overtaxed, perhaps, by the intensive studies of the house—and died in Dutens's arms, saying, "I know you; you shall soon see that I know you." Dutens, already worn by sleepless nights, sank into a despair; and on the day the body was removed he thought he heard the boy's voice summoning him, and was only just held back from suicide.

There was another peculiar episode of this time which I cannot forbear mentioning. When the boy died a younger brother was brought home from school and put in Dutens's charge, and also a sister of eighteen: a pleasing but hapless creature, for she was deaf and dumb and had been practically

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kept in hiding, like an idiot. Presently Dutens found that she had a sensibility and a strange unprejudiced vision of the world; she had never been taught, and the ways of most people in the house were to her incomprehensible. He taught her words, and how to write. Mrs. Wyche's mother seems to have been even more of a dragon to this granddaughter than Mrs. Norris was to Fanny Price; she had tried to prevent her from coming home, and now got her excluded from all neighbouring society. Dutens made protests for staying at home with her, and they explored the world together. For him "it was a sort of study of the book of nature," and for the girl her first really human intercourse. The sequel, given their intimacy and her frankness, was natural enough. She made guileless but unequivocal advances to the young man, who, for her, really was the world, or at least had unlocked it for her. Dutens had to explain about marriage. "Well, let us be married, then," she said after a quarrel, "and torment me no more with your rules and your laws." Dutens was in a quandary. He was attached to her, but not quite like that, and there was Mr. Wyche in the background.

Again, as more than once in his career, fortune intervened like a providence. For just then Mr. Upton (afterwards Lord Templeton) summoned him to London with news of an important opening. Mr. Wyche approved his going: but Miss Wyche, who guessed he was never coming back,

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wept all the day before his departure. His farewells to the parents, heartfelt on both sides, were made when she was out walking. Dutens embarked on another life where he was to find, as he says, more splendour but less happiness, and what became of poor Miss Wyche I do not know.

With the versatility of youth, and, in fact, at one stroke, Dutens entered on two new careers. Mr. Upton, having accepted a secretaryship to the new British Envoy to Turin, now wanted to back out of it; and his plan was to take Dutens out as chaplain and then withdraw and hand on his own part to him. Dutens rose to the plan with an aplomb even more striking than Upton's confidence:

For this purpose, it was necessary that I should enter the Church; but as he had frequently seen me studying Greek and Hebrew and the sacred writings, he had no doubt of my being properly qualified on that head. I thanked Mr. Upton for this proof of his friendship, and saw no obstacle whatever to the execution of his design. He presented me to Mr. Mackenzie, who was our principal; I received his approbation, and immediately took orders; and in the course of fifteen days was put in possession of my place, and was ready to depart.

Happy eighteenth century, when obstacles vanished at a touch! And, for the life of his time, no less happy Dutens, whose vision easily em-

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braced holy orders in a fortnight and diplomacy to follow!

There is a certain ingenuousness in him even when a thorough citizen of the world; and it was strong in him at twenty-eight. After an illness some time before, which awakened him to religion, he discovered that the way leading to virtue and truth is straight and easy, whereas the path of vice, being sinuous, is hard to follow. Success was all the easier for him, he says, because his desire to please was perfectly natural; he always saw the favourable side of people and things before he noticed their defects; and having found out these, returned to the excellences. But his naïve surprise at the shifts and wiles of diplomacy greatly amused his colleagues. In fact, Stuart Mackenzie, his chief (brother of the great Lord Bute), had to lecture him for his excessive habit of truth-telling; yet Dutens found—perhaps in the way noticed above—that Mackenzie had more qualities and fewer faults than any other man he knew, and a very uncommon integrity; and it is to the credit of them both that he proved not only a benefactor to Dutens but his closest friend for life. For the rest, Dutens's social talents and good feeling soon gave him a position in Turin, and he was apt at his work—so much so that when Mackenzie went home to take office in the Government, Dutens was left as *Chargé d'Affaires*.

Still romantically young at thirty, it now appeared to him that he “was become one of the



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heroes of romance, and that the most astonishing tales of the favourite of fortune were to be realized."

On the first day he wrote a despatch to Pitt and ordered out the coach to drive to Court. We need not think it all sheer vanity; his time was brief and he wanted to know about these high matters. And it was a peculiar moment, worth tasting. "Born in France, brought up in France, I found myself Minister from the King of England at a foreign court during a war with France." On the whole he seems to have done it quite well.

In fact, when his reign was over, and he had returned to England and got a little pension of £300 a year for his pains, they sent him back to Turin to do it again. One expects him now to concentrate on diplomacy. But not at all; his mind has flown to study and a scholar's ambitions, and he plans no less a task than to edit all the scattered works of Leibnitz. Five or six Germans had attempted it and failed, vanquished by the dispersion of the fragments. But Dutens did not quaver. He wrote to all the erudite of Europe, they sent him many unknown fragments and original letters, which he arranged with prefaces and notes. Leibnitz, in six large quarto volumes, was published four years after.

All this time he was in orders, though the reader may be excused for not remembering it. Mackenzie remembered, and now persuaded the Duke of Northumberland to offer him an Irish deanery;

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which Dutens, more cautiously than Swift, refused. Presently came another letter saying the Duke had reserved him an English living of £800 a year. This was Elsdon, and he was advised to come and take possession of it at once. So we have now a quaint spectacle: the British diplomatic representative taking leave of the King of Sardinia as a rector-designate. Dutens had been encouraged to hope something of this interview, but although the King dallied with two gold snuff-boxes while it lasted, he did not present his visitor with either. And Dutens found that what was really meant to be gratifying in the conversation was its length.

A little later, then, and he has crossed the Alps, France and England, and is posting along the road from Newcastle to the brink whence the Cheviots spread out as a sea of hills. Elsdon was dotted in front. He had not come from the brightest of Italian cities, but Turin is transalpine, and he may have shivered a little at the change of scene. But nothing could be more unflinchingly summary than his reference to the occasion in the memoirs. He merely says that he went to take possession of his benefice in the north of England, and having met Mr. Mackenzie at Newcastle, as he was coming from Scotland, had the pleasure of returning with him to London.

What he thought of the Northerners, and they of him, must be imagined. The aspect of Dutens we can guess fairly well. Much as he was in the excellent mezzotint done by Fisher ten years later,

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he must have been now, at thirty-six, for it was not a face that would change greatly; only by the time of the portrait he had grown a little more disillusioned—*blasé* he never was. There is a quizzically appreciative air in his small lively eyes, sharply opened nostrils, and slightly tilted nose. But the face that looks out under his peruke is round, youthful, cherubic even. It is humorous and intelligent, and his amused little mouth is firm. He is a character. Like Gibbon's, his face has a buttoned look; not primly pursed, but comfortably fastened. It was circled by a smart, well-curled peruke, which seemed to one critic in London to be a personification of his mind. Macaulay is said to have carried all his knowledge handy in his pocket; Dutens evidently arranged his in the curls of his wig. Gaily sociable as he was, and bent on pleasing, his first appearance is said very naturally to have been a ludicrous shock to the Northerners. The men of Redesdale were not as wild as they had been in old Border days, when they dwelt like Ishmaelites, a very parable of fierceness; but they were stubborn in ways and customs. Dutens's southern vivacity was bound to jar on this potent Northumbrianism.

Not only his manners, but every word he spoke announced him a foreigner. His English was very odd. There is a specimen of it—I do not know how close, for it sounds rather Teutonic—in the one story of his clerical life which has got firmly into print. I quote it as given in Tomlinson's

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"Northumberland"—the raciest and fullest version. His parishioners had kept away from church, alleging that they could not understand a word he said. He then invited all the chief farmers to dinner and professed great surprise when they turned up to the last man. Whereupon one of them called Dutens to witness that he had personally invited him. "Oh, yes," he said, "oh, yes, my very goot friend, I did invite you, and you, and you to my dine; but you all say you no understand one word I speak. Oh, ho! very goot! when I preach from my pulpit you no understand my speak, but when I invite you to my goot dine you very well understand!" Tradition has it that the services were better attended after this inspired stroke of humour.

But a dimness hangs round his ministrations. There are conflicts of evidence about them. He had the good sense, says one authority, not to attempt any professional duties. His congregation seldom or never saw his face, says Dibdin, in his lively but untrustworthy "Bibliographical Decameron"; yet he imagined no one was such a favourite with them as he was. Another authority, not a contemporary like these, but a clergyman who lived in one of the parishes that have been made out of Elsdon, and was an antiquary who edited the parish records, says that Dutens frequently resided and was much respected. What are we to make of it? It all depends on what you mean by "residence," perhaps by "frequently." It is hardly thinkable that a cosmopolitan like Dutens, whose

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taste for polite elegance and the cream of society grew fast, should have settled down for any length of time in those uncouth moorlands, least of all that he should have wintered there in his predecessor's fashion. There is just one reference in the memoirs which hints at a sojourn. "I had retired," he says, "to the country, where, given up to study, I enjoyed the silent conversation of the great men of antiquity . . . when I read in the gazette that Lord Mountstuart had been appointed Envoy to Turin." The nephew of his old friend and chief, the familiar capital—this concatenation was too much for Dutens; he was drawn in, of course, and in a week or two set off to Turin as head of the expedition and oracle of the party. Thus his stay in the country—whether it was Northumberland or not—abruptly ended. He never mentions his parish by name; to introduce it by the side of Kings and courts and capitals would have been merely rustic. The only unmistakable allusion I find is that having spent a summer with the Duke of Northumberland at Alnwick, he agreed to join him in the autumn on a very inconvenient visit to Devonshire, "when he had arranged the affairs of his benefice."

There was not much time over. Four years or more on a grand tour of large dimensions with Lord Algernon Percy; a longish visit to France; the mission to Turin, and then apparently six years in Italy; nine years spent half in London and half at Petersham with the Stuart Mackenzies, helping

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them to entertain noble French *émigrés*—this was one of the happiest times of his life—and finally twelve years, his last, of “lettered ease” in London. These are big tracts of time, and there must be added the quantity of it which he spent with his patrons, the Northumberlands. Dutens was an absentee rector. Not, indeed, a total absentee, like a fair number of his fellows, bishops included; but still a habitual one.

It were a marvel, all things considered, had he not been. Dutens, being wholly a man of his age, has to be weighed according to its standards. I do not say that he was one of those non-residents of whom a really estimable bishop wrote that they were “perhaps doing better service than if they confined themselves to the ordinary labours of the ministry . . . it would be no less impolitic than harsh to call such to residence.” But the drollery of giving a wild Northumbrian parish to a Frenchman being once permitted, it would certainly have been harsh and impolitic to require him to live there.

As a matter of fact he did a good deal more than was to be expected. His phrase about “arranging the affairs of my benefice” really meant something. It would seem that no one before or since has left a clearer mark on all that might be called the temporalities of the parish. He built most, at least, of the needed additions to the old pele-tower. He drew up also the “true note or terrier” of all the glebe, tenements, tithes, etc., belonging

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to the parish church and rectory. This richly local document,\* with its racy enumeration of names and titheable animals (sheep especially), mentions "imprimis the Rectory house, an Ancient square strong building, commonly called a castle, with a small house on the north part there adjoining, for the use of the Curate, with a milk house and Pantry all slated roof, also a Barn and Byer thatched, all which (except the Rectory house) have been built by the Present Incumbent." It is signed and sealed by Dutens, though from the other signatures which follow I fancy the curate wrote it out for him. There is a business-like touch and a sense of the land in these proceedings which mark the individual and perhaps the Frenchman. But his successors have been the gainers, and Dutens did not stop at temporalities. He spent the best part of two thousand pounds in building and endowing a chapelry with a schoolroom for twelve poor children, on the old burial ground of Byrness, at a lonely end of the parish. It is the first church you meet when you have come over the Redeswire out of Scotland. So he did not forget that he had a cure of souls. And with his forthcoming disposition one may suppose that, when he was there, he showed an interest in the

\* I owe the chance of examining it and other documents to the courtesy of the present Rector, the Rev. C. H. Winter, who has spared no pains to enlighten me on the traces of a predecessor whom he regards as having done more for his parish than any one else.

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people; and that the tradition is right which says they learned to like and respect him.

It seemed to him, when he had secured the living, that with good health, a taste for study, powerful friends and means beyond his hopes, there was nothing wanting to his happiness if he could limit his desires; and Mackenzie advised him to stay as he was. But he had not had enough of the world yet, and wished to be more known in it. So he took a simple, but fateful step; he "waited on" the Duke of Northumberland. This was the first duke, the Sir Hugh Smithson who had married the heiress of the Percies: perhaps the most splendid noble of his time in England, and the handsomest. Dutens shall tell the rest.

"I was dazzled by the magnificence of the Duke, enchanted by his politeness and attention, and particularly flattered by the distinction paid to me by the Duchess. Having then more pliancy of disposition than now, I employed the whole of it to interest them in my favour. The Duke was fond of the arts and sciences; I entered into all his tastes, conversed with him on every subject, and he found more variety in my conversation than in that of any other person. The Duchess, on the contrary, was pleased with little witticisms in a circle of friends; and amused herself by collecting prints, medals, etc., I appeared to her as if I had never known any other employment; and in the evening I partook of her social amusements, and studied every means of adding to her pleasure."



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Here, you may say, is the complete toady. That was just what cynical contemporaries said of Dutens. And there is, certainly, a touch of sleekness in his frank confession; it is unblushing, though diverting.

But the entire parasite, I suppose, is one who lives on and by others, whereas Dutens showed a progressive will to live in his own way for himself. For a long time (hoping, no doubt, for larger favours) he was very assiduous to the Northumberland. He was sincerely attached to the Duchess, and on her death, by his own account, he was the only friend who was really staunch to the Duke. But when the Duke proposed that he should come to live with him, enjoying his house and table, being presented as his best friend, and receiving £500 a year, Dutens felt obliged to think. "There was something flattering in this offer; though I clearly understood, reducing it to its just value, that the Duke proposed I should renounce my existence to double his, at a price considerable to me, it is true, but trifling to him." This comedy over the offer went on for some time. At last he firmly chose freedom. With a mind and a will of his own he was not a sycophant so much as a discreet adventurer, and it must be owned that his life was very exposed to temptations.

Dutens was indeed a snob, but with the higher snobbery, which might be called educative. He liked the manners of "the great," and had acquired from them, as he says artlessly, a refinement

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in his way of living, thinking and speaking even, which made anything different seem unbearable. Others have shared the insidious feeling. But it may be expensive. And there came a time when he asked himself what he had gained by fifteen years of courting the great; it had landed him in debt, and had they ever thought of inquiring into his means or providing an addition to his income? When one thinks of what he did receive, then or afterwards, this seems a little less than fair. But what rankled in him, probably, was that the Duke had held out prospects of a richer reward which never came, and had combined affection and business in his final offer on terms that did not seem handsome enough to carry off the mixture. Dutens resolved, at any rate, not to commit himself again and to enjoy the great world, if he could, in a state of freedom.

This may be more easily done abroad than at home; and he had a certain importance of his own abroad. Even when on tour with Lord Algernon, he was far above mere tutors; a valued friend, rather, with almost parental status, and with the great satisfaction of presenting himself at foreign Courts as an ex-Minister of the King of England. His memoirs are freely sprinkled with Courts, and he became something of a referee about them. It makes one think how compact the high society of Europe was then, and how accessible if you had the right card of entry. The only thing which cost Dutens a good deal of trouble was to get an inter-

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view with Frederick the Great; but he achieved it. Perhaps he succeeded better with great ladies than with great men, and he was very much at home in the salons of Paris. It is more surprising that he kept on easy terms with the *philosophes*, having fulminated against them in a work of his, the "Tocsin," or "Appel au Bon Sens," which put deists and atheists in their places; but there was no quarrel, and he helped to get a pension for Diderot. But he was more attracted by the great luminaries in the world of politics and affairs, where he had glimmered faintly. At Vienna he talked with Kaunitz, and in France with Choiseul—a fallen statesman in retirement. One secret of his attraction to the latter, was, perhaps, that his country mansion, Chanteloup, was the most sumptuous Dutens had ever seen—more princely even than Alnwick—and one stayed there in the most perfect freedom. But Choiseul also had a personal charm which won Dutens; and in return his own social verve seems to have been appreciated. There was always a cover laid for him in the Choiseuls' *hotel* in Paris.

"Abroad," then, which for most of us means life among strangers, meant for Dutens a vivid social existence. And something more. Not for nothing did he call his memories the memoirs of a traveller. With him, as with Stevenson, the pleasure of going was to go; and as he indulged in vivacious talk, in suddenly changed projects, so he indulged in the mobility of travel. Never more,

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it seems, than when he had resolved on asserting his independence; his fear of compromising it was such that at first he shrank from settling anywhere. It was in a good English post-chaise that he always travelled, with a portable desk for his papers, and a small portable library of the best authors—the Bible in Hebrew, classics in Greek and Latin, French, English, Italian and Spanish; not to mention the “Historical Dictionary” in thirteen octavo volumes and other works of reference. It sounds as trim as his periwig, too complete to be true; but his range of knowledge was extensive, whatever its depth.

He had an eye for the roads. The memorial of that is his “Itinéraire des Routes les plus fréquentées”; or, as the English version has it, a “Journal of Travels made through the principal cities of Europe; wherein the time employed in going from post to post is marked in hours and minutes; the distances in English miles, measured by means of a perambulator” (*odometre* is the less ambiguous French for this article, attached to the post-chaise) . . . “together with an account of the best inns.” Here are the things a traveller might wish to know—comparative tables of expenses and money exchanges; times, distances and local observations also neatly tabled in columns, with more general remarks on the opposite page: the whole very business-like, yet with a certain *désinvolture* which reminds one that the age of Baedeker had not set in. The first page, starting

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with the Edinburgh-London road, contains, I fancy, the only mention of his parish by name\* which occurs in his works, and describes its country tersely as a "pays de montagnes, mais ou l'on fait de grandes améliorations." That "mais" is significant.

At sixty, finally, he became "un voyageur qui se repose." His life was divided between London and Mr. Mackenzie's house at Petersham, where the French refugee nobles who had settled in the neighbourhood were delightful company. Then Lady Betty Mackenzie died, and within a year her husband followed her, inconsolable. Mackenzie was eighty, Dutens was then seventy; it was a great severance for him, but with alleviations, for £15,000 was left to him and he was made executor and residuary legatee with the two nephews—the Irish Primate and Lord Bute.

"The sanction which this event gave to my character and conduct, from a man so respectable as Mr. Mackenzie, to whom I had been attached for forty-two years, established me still more in the esteem and opinion of his family and friends. I made use of it to form for myself a society more necessary to me at my advanced age, not being able to apply myself to study with the same attention as formerly."

That meant a London life until his death at eighty-two. The last stage of his existence must have

\* Except on a title-page, where he puts his title as "Rector of Elsdon" beside that of "Historiographer to the King."

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been much to his taste. He had a house in Mount Street, and what one observer describes as "a gently rolling chariot." The domestic courtier was courted himself for his vivacity and knowledge of the world and books; invitations flooded him in the season, and a place was always left for him at many great houses. Dibdin pronounces him one of the heartiest men for his age whom he ever saw. We catch a glimpse of him playing billiards; and again as looking round complacently for some favourite *bas-bleu* to take his arm when dinner was announced, a regular "Sir Plume." Probably the ladies had always done more for him than the men. He certainly had a gift for friendships with women, and perhaps in one or two cases it is only his discretion which veils a further intimacy.

He would have been forgotten, however, if he had not written books—although no one reads them. I would not speak too irreverently of his learning, which made him a Fellow of the Royal Society, a member of the Academy of Inscriptions, and "Historiographer to the King." But it is better to meditate their variety in a catalogue—the bewildering variety of a dilettante scholar—than to explore many of them, short though they are. He edited not only Leibnitz, but "Daphnis and Chloe." He wrote of medals, precious stones, the origin of the arch, and the anticipation of modern discoveries by the ancients (an inquiry which ranges from their achievements in philosophy and music to the question of whether they wore linen

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shirts). One lucid little work outlines a reunion of Christendom and combats the practices of Rome. Another, the "Ami des Etrangers Qui Voyagent en Angleterre," is an intelligent brief guide which may be classed with his road-book. He produced a narrative of events "from the beginning of the King's illness to the appointment of a Regent," which seems harmless enough; but "Prinny," though he did not read it, ceased to ask him to his parties afterwards. Dutens, whatever his claims as an author, was a lover of books: there are some nice ones in the selection from his library which was sold by Leigh and Sotheby in December 1802—directly after the much more important sale of the library of John Wilkes.

But naturally it is by his Memoirs that he survives, just because he tells the curious story of his life there. As a picture of the illustrious persons and scenes he knew they are disappointing, even rather dull. And a good deal of the relish of autobiography is missing because he treated his own life chiefly as a canvas for these scenes. His naïve admissions are more telling, but they come with no break of tone from the rest, and one asks in some bewilderment what the man, under the uniform glaze of it all, really was. To one contemporary his whole story is a shameless record of obsequious efforts to get money and get on. *Quaerenda pecunia*—and certainly Dutens had a sense for money. He had to live and he wanted to live well. But then he only tells us of the steps

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which he climbed by. From himself we should never gather what he spent on his parish; and I have an impression, somehow, that he did a good many kindnesses in his life.

He lacked some finer delicacies; that certainly may be granted to his critics, who also suspected him because he had got on too well for a foreigner. Yet when he rounds off his memoirs with a remark on the infallible guidance of religion, they do not suggest it was a mere tag. Nor do I think it was. It is the mark of an abiding simplicity in Dutens that he could put it in like that, almost as he recounts his taking orders as a step to diplomacy. He lived in an age which took much for granted, and there were some incongruities he could not see. Though he would have been the liveliest and most ingenious of companions for a party or a visit, his mind was not a really interesting one. But with all the limits to his view and the freedom of his ways he was a good fellow, and he had a rather peculiar complexion of character which gives the accent to his versatile life. It was certainly a strange one. But anyone who can shape so many odd threads into a success, into something like a work of art even, deserves to be thought about; and Dutens not only did this but enjoyed the doing of it extremely.



## A CONTRAST IN TRAVEL: JOHNSON AND WORDSWORTH

THIRTY years, precisely to the day, after Johnson and Boswell met in Edinburgh to begin their Scottish journey, the Wordsworths left Grasmere to join Coleridge for a Highland tour. It is not of much importance that the scenes they visited were more often similar than the same. Johnson and Boswell, as we know, went up the east side of Scotland to Aberdeen, crossed the Highlands by the best riding route from Inverness to the west coast, and after they had roamed among the Hebrides made their way back to Glasgow and Edinburgh. The Wordsworth party came up through the Lowlands to Glasgow, went through the Argyll and Perthshire Highlands, and returned by Edinburgh and the Border country. The two routes thus rarely intersected, but the eyes of the respective travellers were so unlike that it would have made little difference if they had followed the same road. The entertainment lies in the contrast of their visions, and hardly less in their response to the hazards of the journey, the pitch of nerves and temper on which all travellers depend.

One of the pleasantest traits of Johnson's tour

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is that it caps his rugged life with a kind of handsome affluence. It was started with a really imperial movement. While he rolls rapidly northwards in post-chaises (his favourite vehicle) to the place of concentration at Edinburgh, always with a competent escort, he reminds us of Napoleon setting out in his berlin to Charleroi for the chances of the last campaign. And Boswell was not only a companion but a busy chief of staff. He paved the way and planned the combinations, with his industrious advances to the scholars, the law lords, and the lairds and chiefs. For however stimulating a primitive life might be, Boswell knew Johnson's habits and prejudices far too well to leave him at the mercy of the wilds; he meant to show him, by a well-staged procession of worthies, what cultivated Scotland could produce. On the whole he handsomely succeeded; Johnson thawed to humanity more easily than to Nature. He found conversational equals at Edinburgh, admired the patriarchal chieftains, and was hospitably entertained by a duke; whereas the Wordsworths could converse only with dukes' gardeners, and were sometimes even rebuffed by them.

But no occasional elegances could make the tour of the Hebrides into a feather-bed journey, and the way in which Johnson faced its rigours will be always a surprise. There came the moment when the travellers must leave post-chaises and take horse; and yet another when they exchanged horses for small shelties. At sixty-four the old

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dictator of letters, the Londoner, was quite at home upon a horse, and he rode with a fox-hunter's perseverance. The stormy transit of the islands also left him unperturbed. Here the plan had gone wrong; they waited till summer was over, and Walter Scott, who comments on the risks they ran, said he had heard those who remembered the journey express surprise they were not drowned. It is characteristic that on their most doubtful crossing Boswell, in a vivacious terror, kept the deck, and was only calmed by being given a useless rope to hold, while Johnson rested unconcernedly below; characteristic, too, that Boswell should confess to his own panic and tell us that Johnson did not know the risk. But Johnson, one may believe, would have been unshakable in any case. Despising all heroics, he thought that the Glasgow professors made a very unnecessary fuss about their safe return. "We are addressed as if we had made a voyage to Nova Zembla and suffered five persecutions in Japan."

Johnson and Boswell were more adventurous explorers than the Wordsworths. But they travelled as great personages, and their route was studded with the attentive, ceremonious welcomes only given to men of mark. It was otherwise with the Wordsworths and Coleridge; they were obscure vagabonds of the road. Tourists they might be, but they moved on the people's level and looked as if they belonged to the people themselves. The whole expedition was in keeping with Words-

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worth's disregard of class—the same indifference which had led him, with a prompt and admirable certainty, to choose just the life required by his genius and his sister's tastes. They slipped across the Border in their own vehicle, which seems to have been an Irish car; though Rogers, who saw the party for a moment at Dumfries, describes it simply as a cart. Wordsworth drove; Coleridge was a shivering passenger and Dorothy a gay one. In the Alfoxden days Coleridge had vaunted his ability to drive; none the less, when Wordsworth left him alone with Dorothy he got down and led the horse. The horse was the unconscious pivot of the journey; it was to learn that Scotland was a vaster, rougher place than Cumberland, to toil by day and night on interminable hill-roads and broken moor tracks, to suffer at the hands of brutal men in ferrying the sea-lochs. It suffered, even as Stevenson's gentle she-ass suffered in the Cevennes, but the Wordsworths were humane masters and spared it all they could. Wordsworth was competent for most occasions; he could mend a wheel under instruction and patch up broken harness with whatever came to hand. But probably the party soon betrayed the wear and tear of travel; at Glasgow they had a motley air, half tinker and half tourist, looking, in fact, the ambiguous folk they were. Not for them was the courtly welcome which the professors gave to Johnson; they got, instead, the embarrassing notice of every person in the streets; "indeed," says

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Dorothy Wordsworth, "we had the pleasure of spreading smiles from one end of Glasgow to the other"—and they bore it very well.

Sleeping in rough inns, in a farmhouse or a ferryman's hut, they had all the aroma of the Highlands and saw its primitive life at the closest view. Dorothy notes each detail sharply with a relishing pen. And as they were simple people themselves, and also of the hills, the Scottish hearts went out to them and they made friends. They never knew Boswell's exhilaration at dining richly in a fort while the band played and the Highland wilderness lay round; nor the romantic thrill which went through Johnson when he found a small island "occupied not by a gross herdsman, or amphibious fisherman, but by a gentleman and two ladies, of high birth, polished manners, and elegant conversation." And yet, though nameless travellers, they had a recognition at the end which eclipses anything that Boswell can record. For what were the scholars and the judges, the Robertsons, Haileses and Monboddos, compared to the genius of Walter Scott? When Scott played cicerone to the Wordsworths in the Lowlands he was not yet the master of romance but the discoverer of the ballads and the Border, the Sheriff with innumerable friends. But this encounter with the Wordsworths set a seal on their tour and brought them into the kingdom of imagination again.

The temperaments of all the travellers are an

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interesting study. In this little gallery of five there were two robust but difficult dispositions, Johnson's and Wordsworth's, both with a turn to silence and melancholy; two exceedingly vivacious beings, Boswell and Dorothy; and there was Coleridge, sick in body and mind, but with flashes of humour and brilliance that routed depression. Dorothy Wordsworth is distinctly the most joyous of them, the sunniest and most equable; it would be absurd to anticipate, in this radiant girl with the wild eyes, any shadow of the cloud which fell on her when she was growing an old woman. She is even more alert than Boswell, as her attention was not distracted by vanity and was as keen for Nature as for human things. Less noisy in her spirits than Boswell, who bounces like a ball, she had a blither, purer heart, with steadier reasons for joy in her passion for beauty, her intense devotion to her brother, and a deep feeling for Coleridge, which we may fairly guess to have been unspoken love. Boswell, who stands closest to her in vivacity, was an artist in literature and also, after his own way, in life; but he was more sensual than sensuous, and his imagination gave a fitful light at best. So we find him, once at least, completely bored and torpid, longing only for the next meal and clinging to the spectacle of Johnson's calmness "as a man whose head is turning giddy at sea looks at a rock or any fixed object." But considering that Johnson and Boswell were shaken up together for thirteen weeks, scarcely

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ever parted by day and constantly occupying the same room at night, their genial forbearance is a pattern for travelling companions. For a large part of the time they were in other people's society; yet there, if ever, Boswell was on duty, bringing out the great man, working up his hosts, sustaining an odd part with untiring versatility. Johnson does justice to the "frankness and gaiety which made everyone communicative." But the difference of temperament between the two was a reef on which they might have split. *Oderunt hilarem tristes*; so Boswell quotes, to explain why his enthusiastic bustle rasped on Johnson's nerves. The undertone of Johnson's nature was massively, superbly *triste*. "Our sense is so much stronger of what we suffer than of what we enjoy"—with that sentence from his book he opens a window into his own mind.

Besides a will and courage to keep melancholy at bay, Johnson had his energetic play of mind. We see it in the amazing promptness of image and analogy in his talk; but his mind was neither speculative nor, in the full artistic sense, creative; it needed a constant supply of facts to feed on. When the autumn weather thickened in the Hebrides, and made them continually stormbound, it was natural that he, too, should be bored. He yearned to be in civilization again and "go on with life." But this was impatience rather than collapse; he was still eager to see more islands, and he got to Iona in the end. To Boswell he often

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said that the journey had been the happiest time of his life. There is only one instance of his temper giving way. It was before they crossed to Skye, at the end of their longest moorland ride. The evening had grown dusky, and Boswell was for going on ahead to beat up quarters in Glenelg. Johnson burst into a fit of passion which would be inexplicable were it not that he was weary and had just had a shock from his horse's slip upon the mountain; it was, he tells us, the only moment of the journey when he thought he was in danger. "I am diverted with you, sir," said Boswell, as the great man compared his conduct to a pick-pocket's. The scene cost Boswell a sleepless night; the reconciliation next morning, in its utter candour, shows how unbreakable was the tie between these diverse friends.

So Johnson and Boswell never parted, but Wordsworth and Coleridge did. It would be interesting to know exactly why they separated, not merely as an incident of travel, but because their relationship, then and afterwards, is one of the famous cases in literary history. Dorothy's journal shows no rift of harmony, and accounts for the parting simply by the weather and the state of Coleridge's health. The rain came down on them at Tarbet and seemed likely to go on; and for Coleridge, racked with rheumatic pains, to sit drenched in an open carriage was a gruesome lot. The idea was that he should go back to Edinburgh by the high road. But directly he leaves the



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Wordsworths he upsets our idea of him as an invalid by tearing right on afoot through the Highlands at the rate of over thirty miles a day. His explanation is that after one day's walking, "having found myself so happy alone (such blessing is there in perfect liberty!), I walked off."

Was there a further reason? In one of his letters Coleridge says that Wordsworth was too hypochondriacal to be the best of companions for him. He also owns that somehow or other he had not been quite comfortable with the others. There was a good deal on his mind; the two disasters of his life, opium and a luckless marriage, were pinning him down. Mr. Dykes Campbell suggests that in the close intimacy of travel he could not take the narcotics which made his life endurable. Coleridge, however, denies having taken opiates when he left his friends; daytime was tolerable so long as he could walk immensely, excited by fresh objects, though the horrors fell on him at night. *His* memorial of the journey is, pathetically enough, "The Pains of Sleep." He is the stricken man among these travellers; and all Dorothy's sympathy may have been needed to bridge the gulf between Wordsworth's silences and his distress.

It is inevitable to think of Wordsworth and Coleridge as romantic wanderers; of Johnson and Boswell as urbane rationalists in imaginative things. But romance of some kind has stirred in travellers' hearts since Elizabethan days, and in-

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deed before them, and we must be careful what we say. Undoubtedly, there was a romantic idea behind the Boswellian journey. It had sprung far back, so far indeed that neither Johnson nor Boswell could say exactly when this was. The enticement is compactly put by Boswell; it was "simplicity and wildness, and all the circumstances of remote time and place." The old romance of the strange and unfamiliar, of a far distance happily brought within their reach, was what they went out to seek. For strangeness, indeed, Johnson was a romance in himself; so curious it was that the sage of town pavements should be marooned in Skye or Coll, and yet so apt that the old Tory should be thrown with chieftains and with Flora Macdonald. His own sensibility, like Boswell's, responded to contrast above all, being a thing of humorous fancy or deliberate reflection rather than of the shaping spirit which creates.

Some of the actual contrasts catch the eye; a vision, for instance, of Johnson and Boswell driving over the Aberdeenshire heaths, with Ritter, Boswell's Bohemian valet, and Gory, the black servant whom Lord Monboddo had sent to meet them, on horseback in front. A strange group on the northern moor—and the travellers are alive to it. "Those two fellows, one from Africa, the other from Bohemia, seem quite at home." The travellers had a mediæval tinge in their romance, and felt repaid for miles of dreary travel when some signs of elegance rose suddenly, like an enchanted

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castle, out of the waste. But note how closely, in Johnson at least, the reason dogs the fancy. Boswell was transported at finding the smart entertainment and military band of Fort George on a wild shore. Johnson declined to be amazed; he knew there was a fort there, and that money had been spent on it, and he would have been astonished to find less. "*He* looked coolly and deliberately through all the gradations, *my* warm imagination jumped from the barren sands to the splendid dinner and brilliant company." When they came to Maclean's elegant abode on Inch-kenneth, Johnson, as we have seen, extolled its romance; apparently this was something that reason could not have foreseen, and he let himself go. But Johnson's deeper reactions were all to history and tradition; he looked intently for the traces of patriarchal life, sympathized discriminatingly with the condition of the Highlanders, and was disgusted with a chieftain in whom the clan spirit seemed to have died. And when he was in a calmly solemn scene that fitted his own temper, especially if, like Iona, it appealed to the religious sense on which he brooded and built, he rose with a great adagio which gives his pages a real majesty of prose.

Here, none the less, the real difference between Johnson and the Wordsworths came into view. It is not only that Johnson and Boswell, for all their expansions, belonged to the age of reason; they were also distinctly people of the town. Their busi-

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ness, as Johnson says, lay with life and manners, and they looked at everything, nature included, with social eyes. Their imagination could be stirred by strange variations in humanity, but it was inadequate to the wildness of nature. On mountainous country, for instance, Johnson's reflection is that it makes a great part of the earth, and that anyone who has never seen it must live unacquainted with much of the face of Nature, and with one of the great scenes of human experience. There he gives us the angle of his view; to travel in wild country does not quicken our imagination, it extends our knowledge. "As we see more we become possessed of more certainties, and consequently gain more principles of reasoning"—but it does not follow that the heart is stirred. Pressed, finally, by an indiscreet questioner, Johnson blurted out his whole impression of the matter: "Who *can* like the Highlands? I like the inhabitants very well."

Johnson's bad eyesight was, of course, against him; there must have been a great deal which he literally did not see. He might not have liked it any better if he had. But once, at least—it was on the sunny forenoon of the day which ended with his outburst against Boswell—Johnson yields dreamily, half unconsciously to the spell of place:

I sat down on a bank, such as a writer of romance might have delighted to feign. I had indeed no trees to whisper over my head, but a

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clear rivulet streamed at my feet. The day was calm, the air soft, and all was rudeness, silence, and solitude. Before me, and on either side, were high hills which, by hindering the eye from ranging, forced the mind to find entertainment for itself. Whether I spent the hour well I know not, for here I first conceived the thought of this narration.

The mountains, which inspired him as a rule with no images except those of want and danger, had caught him in a good hour; he felt no love for them, but they moved him to create.

The Wordsworthian attitude was the reverse of this. Dorothy conveys it in a sentence:

I can always walk over a moor with a light foot; I seem to be drawn more closely to Nature in such places than anywhere else; or rather I feel more strongly the power of Nature over me, and am better satisfied with myself for being able to find enjoyment in what, unfortunately, to many persons is either dismal or insipid.

Sometimes this difference of vision becomes exquisitely comic. When the earlier travellers reached Leith, Boswell hopefully drew his companion's attention to the Firth of Forth, not without some hint of comparison to the grandeur of Constantinople and the Bay of Naples. All he got from Johnson was one of those hammer-

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strokes whose stupidity is so massive that it almost touches wisdom. "Aye, that is the state of the world. Water is the same everywhere." The uniformity of water! Consult Dorothy Wordsworth on the point; in one of those first glimpses from the Quantocks—"the sea, big and white, swelled to the very shores, but round and high in the middle"—or in her Cumbrian lake pictures, or the impressions of the sea-lochs in this Highland diary. Johnson saw the sea as a relentless blue monotony, just as Ovid saw it in exile, a senseless gulf beyond which lay invisible Rome. And he quotes Ovid. But Dorothy knows that you can no more see the same water twice than, as an old philosopher said, you can twice set your foot in it. Or if you prefer Johnson's rationalism, you can say that it is the eye and the mind which are always changing; for the imaginative no sights repeat themselves.

Dorothy Wordsworth saw and wrote of natural things as an expert lover. How could it be otherwise, when her keenest joy in life was to thrill to these experiences, and, sharing them with her brother, to see her perceptions against the background of his deeper vision? Like him, she was a dedicated spirit, vowed not only to the life which they pursued of choice, but to the service of his genius while it was revolutionizing poetry. With her sensitive eye at the beginning and her patience at the end she had often a first and last hand in what he wrote. Some sight or note of hers inspired

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his subject; and when the poem is made it is she who toils on the writing out and rewriting which made Wordsworth physically ill. But her journals show her as an individual spirit, with a distinct and exquisite gift. It flashes out through all disguises; and the Cumbrian peasants, notoriously cold about Wordsworth, could see that there was brilliance in her. "Folks said she was the cleverest mon of the two at his job, and he allays went to her when he was puzzled. Dorothy had the wits, though she went wrang, ye kna." Modern criticism makes short work of the delusion that she was the real poet, but it has done justice to this rustic insight. As Sir Walter Raleigh says, she had quicker and more agile perceptions than her brother.

These have the freedom of a swallow's flight, and yet are so exact that she is a real artist in things visual. Without the depth and passion of her brother, she has more of the painter's eye for form. There, too, she rises above Boswell, who confesses that he always found it difficult to describe visible things. Coleridge defined her taste quaintly as a perfect electrometer, which protruded and drew in at subtlest beauties and most recondite faults. And by a piece of good luck we can compare her touch and Coleridge's in sketching a thing which struck them both. It was in the ferryman's cottage at Loch Katrine, where the three spent a merry and delightful night. Coleridge says that the room given to Dorothy

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was varnished so rich with peat smoke than an apartment of highly polished oak would have been poor to it—it would have wanted the metallic lustre of the smoke-varnished rafters.

And Dorothy says:

We laughed and laughed again, in spite of the smarting of our eyes, yet had a quieter pleasure in observing the beauty of the beams and rafters gleaming between the clouds of smoke. They had been crusted over and varnished by many winters till, where the firelight fell upon them, they were as glossy as black rocks on a sunny day cased in ice.

Dorothy's notes of country are often thoroughly pictorial, with the artistic zest of an age when men were connoisseurs of scenes and details, the age of the great English landscape-painters. There is a well-known passage of the "Prelude" where Wordsworth deploras the time when he yielded to anything so frivolous as a comparison of scene with scene; but on travel he was as eager as the rest. As they skirted Loch Lomond the queer-shaped Cobbler came into view among the other mountains. "We called out with one voice: 'That's what we wanted!' alluding to the frame-like monotony of the side-screens of the lake for the last five or six miles." I hardly think that Dorothy Wordsworth's Scottish journal, full of



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true colour though it is, equals the charm of the Alfoxden or Grasmere diaries, because it has more of this emphasis on scenery, which is natural to a traveller's shifting view. It has less of the delicate fruitage that seems only to be won by a loving frequentation of one place; and it lacks the delightful counterpart of the "interiors" in the other journals—the brother and sister drawing to the fire to read poetry, or listening to the stories of beggars at the door. Yet there is hardly a passage in which Dorothy does not show that she has found out, like Blake, the excellence which lies in minute particulars.

The strength of this particular journal, in spite of the slight emphasis just mentioned, lies in its sensitive balance between the natural and the human interest. And the result is that there is no piece of writing where Wordsworth's sister is so Wordsworthian; nowhere else has she so perceptively related "the souls of lonely places" to the men and women who dwell in them. One extract is enough to show how easily this came. They passed a decayed cottage in a Lowland valley, surrounded by some exquisitely shaped hills:

We went on, looking before us, the place losing nothing of its hold upon our minds, when we discovered a woman sitting right in the middle of the field, alone, wrapped up in a grey cloak or plaid. She sat motionless all the time we looked at her, which might be nearly half an

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hour. We could not conceive why she sat there, for there were neither sheep nor cattle in the field; her appearance was very melancholy. . . . No doubt, that woman had been an inhabitant of the cottage. However this might be, there was so much obscurity and uncertainty about her, and her figure agreed so well with the desolation of the place, that we were indebted to the chance of her being there for some of the most interesting feelings that we had ever had from natural objects connected with man in dreary solitariness.

Here, if it were shaped by imagination and the power of verse, lies a poem like the "Leech-Gatherer" or "The Solitary Reaper." Though Dorothy Wordsworth was troubled sometimes by the ragged, dishevelled look of Scotland, as compared with the condensed beauty of mountain and green valley in the Lakes, she pronounces it the country above all others where a man of imagination might carve out his own pleasures, because it has so many "*inhabited* solitudes." It is striking, too, as showing how Wordsworth himself never forgets man in nature, that all but one of his lyrics on this journey are inspired by persons. That is true even of the Ossian poem, which reaches out for the human import in a lonely glen. "The Highland Girl" is a movement of delight at a single figure, and in "Stepping Westward" and "The Solitary Reaper" it is a chance meeting or

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sight of humanity which kindles the poetry of solitude to life. The two poems on Burns—in the second of which, at least, Wordsworth uses Burns's metre with such peculiar tenseness and success—are purely human; and "The Blind Highland Boy" and the Jedburgh anecdote, whatever their failings, were human too.

Johnson also had his "Highland Maid," but instead of writing a lyric about her he gave her a copy of Cocker's "Arithmetic." Which is a small but eloquent sign of how differently these travellers encountered the same things. Perhaps their closest point of contact was at Inverary, in the Duke of Argyll's domain. There the conservative instincts of the Wordsworths quite rose to the ducal aspects of the scene, though they only went round the grounds, whereas Johnson and Boswell were entertained at the castle. In the other journey Inverary is notable as the place where Boswell's eye quickened to the smart housemaids, and where he pertly maintained his self-respect against the duchess, who would not look at him because he had been on the wrong side in a legal quarrel; while Johnson had a great success with the duke and the ladies. At the islands of Loch Lomond, where the two journeys overlapped again, we get a typical case of the Johnson-Wordsworth contrast. Dorothy is lost in wonder at their mysterious and intricate enchantment. Johnson, who misses a taming, civilizing hand, says that: "The islets, which court the gazer at a distance, disgust him at his approach."

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These comparisons may seem to diminish Johnson. Yet, in spite of what has been said in praise of Dorothy Wordsworth, his "Journey to the Western Islands" is, with Wordsworth's lyrics, the rarest product of these journeys. The islanders who said of Johnson "Honest man, he's pleased with everything," did not guess the thoughts at the back of his head; but even in Scotland the pungent interest of the book and its broad sweep of reflection made up for the strictures, and they use it now as a school text-book in Skye. It has as much modesty as dogmatism; this stands confessed in the final sentence where Johnson owns that his thoughts on national manners are those of one who has seen little. But it lives, above all, by the quality of the prose. Perhaps no narrative of place or people has been so nakedly unadorned since Cæsar's; it leaves almost everything to the imagination. Curiously, however, this defiance of atmosphere makes it the very book for a wild country. The spare, crisp phrases—Johnson being here at his tersest—suggest the sharp lines of rock and hill; the abstract style calls up a sense of empty, desert spaces. So Johnson unconsciously prepares us for an enjoyment which he did not share. The feelings excited by a strange experience gave a new cadence to his prose; it echoes in that highly practical warning which may stand as a traveller's last word:

We found in the course of our journey the

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convenience of having disencumbered ourselves, by laying aside whatever we could spare; for it is not to be imagined without experience how in climbing crags, and treading bogs and winding through narrow and obstructed passages, a little bulk will hinder, and a little weight will burden; or how often a man that has pleased himself at home with his own resolution, will, in the hour of distress and fatigue, be content to leave behind him everything but himself.

“A little bulk will hinder, and a little weight will burden”—forsaking polysyllables, Johnson has left a haunting music in those words.

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY AS ART

"W H A T is the use," Marie Bashkirtseff asks, "of lying and posing? It is clear that my desire, if not my hope, is to *remain* upon this earth, by whatever means may be." The Russian girl, who is remembered no longer as an artist but only as herself, has surely fastened on the ultimate source of autobiography. It is the self-preserving instinct, or, as the philosopher puts it, the effort to persist in one's own being. It need not be self-recognized or avowed, for it is in the depths and primal. Yet this, and perhaps this only, is a trait common to all who have written the story of their lives. Their records, shaped by the motives and interests of the conscious self, are pliant to all types of accident and character. They may write, as Rousseau did, from the sheer impulse of self-confession. Or they can be prompted to edification, like St. Augustine; or to self-defence, like Newman. Or else, as is common with the memoirists and diarists, what engrosses them is simply their own vivacious journey, and they thrill again to their impressions of every feature on the road. But all stand committed to affirm themselves, and to save their own souls and lives out of the wreck of change. The instinct declares itself in a last act of will by those

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already famous, and it appears as the secret life of those unknown and thwarted, like Barbellion, who still feel that in the self, which is theirs and no other's, they have something of unique value to give.

We who read them are quick to respond. By the law of its nature it might seem that the autobiography would have to be a photograph, but we recognize it as a true creation. The figures so revived have just the immediacy and completeness which is to be found in art, but in life is constantly missing. Life is certainly creation, but we are too distracted by its currents to recognize this in others, or perhaps in ourselves. The self-told record of a life, even if it is a story of despair and failure, reveals the oneness of art and living. Our response is an expression of the spirit of life, which sees and knows itself in this mirror, and rejoices that its energy should conceive as well as act. For the man's life, as now disclosed, has the spontaneity of action, and yet is held apart and completed in the form of a design. It has been taken out of its enchainning fetters and now appears as something new.

This primitive freshness it shares only with the creations of imaginative art, which have never existed in the real, but subsist unendingly because we can see them as a whole. The biographer, with the best intentions and the subtlest insight, can never give exactly this impression. The truth, the interest, and the art of his portrait are still those of second-hand; he, much more, is in the position of

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the photographer, who must do despairingly what he can with a succession of arrangements from outside. He is as tied to the document as a historian, and his best materials—the *ipsissima verba* of his subject—must be placed in a different perspective from that of the man who wrote them.

Whenever autobiography rises in the least above the dry bones of a register it bears another certain mark of creation, as being individual. It exists only to be this, since the desire to survive is a desire to survive as oneself and not another. There again we hail it with delight, for it gives us something of which we are always seekers. We know that our own individuality is only realized, if at all, amid effort and confusion. The individual seems blankly missing among numbers whom we meet. The consolation of autobiography is that it reveals this possession in unexpected places, and well-nigh persuades us, after all, that it is the most important thing in life. Instead of being an exception, it seems to be within reach of anyone who has the will to make it. The discovery, however illusive, is agreeable now. It is curious that the habit and taste for autobiography should have grown steadily while outwardly we are more and more under the spell of collective feeling, and individualism is practically obsolete as a social or political creed. One might fancy that journals and autobiographies have become the last refuge of the individual, who there, at least, may save his personality from being obliterated by the mass.



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Indeed, these records are, in their way, a clue to the relations between the one and the many. Those who write them attest their own existence as individuals, and those who read them approve its value. But what the reader looks for is no longer any exotic particularity—perhaps because he has little hope of finding it; it is rather his common humanity, here minutely caught and pictured.

The general human truth of autobiography has only been realized by degrees. It is the explosive assertions of personality which have opened our eyes, and all the reactions to these have counted. We do not respond equally in all cases, being moved sometimes by the sense for truth, and sometimes by circumstance and temperament. The defiant cases are usually the touchstone. Four centuries have passed since Benvenuto Cellini, and yet there is among these writers no more aggressive, not to say flagrant, individual. The impact of his domineering person is beyond any challenge. Clearly as we see him, however, it is at a distance; something in him outrages what is human. He is like a supple, magnificent animal, sporting among men and turning on them with a sudden violence or cunning. We watch him as through a glass or from outside the bars. That he should shoot the Constable of France one day, an innkeeper on another, and cure himself of indisposition by eating wild peacocks seems unreal and binding, like a dream. Perhaps the trait in him which brings him nearest is his untiring passion for his art.

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The difficulty of treating Cellini as a man is that the historical sense gets in our way. He represents the late, luxuriant Renaissance so exactly that the whole picture absorbs us and he becomes a document rather than a man. He is unlucky, too, at the present moment. A few years ago we could swallow his homicides and his swagger as the pure romance of individuality. We have now had enough of physical violence and want something else. Our separation from him is thus partly due to circumstances, but it is also made by his own nature. Coolly as he relates his own doings, we have more than a suspicion that he is not playing fair. In spite of Symonds's efforts to present him as a model of veracity, we feel that he has a continuous desire to impose. That is what really makes the gulf. Autobiography is not, or course, collaboration, but it does imply community; the writer is putting his experience at the disposal of the world. Cellini, however, carries over into his book a spirit of trampling hostility. It is true to his nature and his time, but in spite of its brilliance and amazing entertainment the impression is a little inhuman. We cannot feel at one with a man who insists on getting the better of us.

So it is Rousseau rather than Cellini who wakes the sense of universal truth. He also is defiant, but in another way. The intention is more conscious and more pungent; Rousseau proclaims as with a trumpet that he is doing something which has no precedent and will have no imitators. This, of

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course, is the illusion of vanity; what Rousseau did has made it exactly possible for other people to do the same. A hundred years later Marie Bashkirtseff will say that she is offering the reader something of a kind that he has never known; yet Rousseau has done it before her and she only writes because he has. But the consciousness of a message, the feeling of uniqueness, are signs to which we have to bow. They are the marks of a spirit self-appointed to its task, and in each case the result has been a masterpiece. Even the vanity of self-assumption witnesses to a standard; it shows that the writer is trying for a more uncompromising truth. It is, in fact, the prophetic strain in autobiography. The cup of exaltation in Rousseau is full and brimming over, and it has been mixed to its poignant flavour by a sufferer and a vagabond. He is the first of the insulted and injured. Proud in the awareness of his genius, stung by real and fancied catastrophes, thirsting for an unattainable tranquillity, he makes a glory of his shame. For the exhibitions of prowess in which Cellini revelled he substitutes humiliations. He has set down the moral abasements, the secret physical infirmities, which others would cut themselves in pieces rather than avow. Surely, we say, this is a mind diseased, and the sane will do well to avoid it. Yet Rousseau, wholly unabashed, confident, indeed, of his essential goodness, has the temerity to invite us all to follow his example and then say, if we can, that we are better than he.

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Whether we are better or not, he makes us feel in some way the same. There are those who dissent from this; they detest his nature, they mistrust his purpose, and they would only admit a responsibility for him in the sense that society is responsible for a lunatic. And if Rousseau is, as he declares, unique among men, and, as we know, is a neurasthenic and finally a madman, it may seem a mockery to contend for his universal truth to nature. Brunetière's thunderous "Ce sont les œuvres d'un fou" will then be the appropriate conclusion. Yet the experience of countless readers of the "Confessions" shows that this is not the final word. It is impossible to believe that a purely morbid attraction has made the fortune of this book—which, after all, is more full of the joy of life, of a fresh and honest realism, than it is of psychological confidences. Its claim rests first on its sincerity; and that, as one of his keenest critics has said, is a quality with which we may credit Rousseau, whether we think well or poorly of his veracity. The pledge of it, and the reason which makes the "Confessions" a great work of art, is that he found there the real subject pursued elsewhere in thin disguises, namely, his own character and life. He is not an analyst, nor even (by modern standards) a deep introspective, but he had the kind of consciousness which may be called a pictorial vision of the self in a degree only rivalled by his two descendants, Byron and Chateaubriand. So he became the founder of our modern personal

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literature. Of all the autobiographers he remains the most important, as having devoted his genius to a self-portrait "dans toute la vérité de la nature," and laid down that this truth and nothing short of it was the duty of a writer.

A claim of this kind supersedes the value of all merely "pleasant" art. It destroys those standards of beauty and ugliness, truth and falsehood, which are founded only on chance liking. And just as insistently does it challenge the moral judgment. It invites us to ask how much of fear, of secrecy and conformity enters into that. Has a moral verdict any place at all in this region? Little claim would be made for it if autobiography were not, in some sense, a mixed art. It is art, but it is also—as nearly as may be—life at first hand, and we involuntarily apply to it the same prohibitions and sanctions which are current for behaviour. Probably this is inevitable, but none the less it may be wrong; not only because the autobiographer is an artist, but because if morality narrows his province it loses its best chance of getting authentic material for truth.

Even within its own limits the moral judgment is scarcely ever applied fairly. The attitude in most cases is that of people shooting from behind a hedge. The autobiographer shows all; we show nothing, and attack him for what he shows. Sometimes he lets us feel his resentment, like Barbellion, in the furious passage where he bids us come out of the defences where we skulk. There

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ought to be a fair convention. It is not a new one, for Rousseau had demanded it already, but it should be put into use. If the reader "judges" his author, he must also, in the same measure, judge himself. "*Que chacun se découvre*" is the only maxim. It does not mean that we should all be autobiographers, but that in reading them we should submit ourselves to the same exposure as theirs. After doing that we can gather up such scraps of morality as remain. Most likely we shall scarcely feel inclined to gather them, for we shall have passed altogether beyond the sphere of judgment. This, surely, is the purport of Rousseau's tremendous invocation, which conceals under a mask of egoism the soundest rule of guidance in these matters.

While he believes his revelation to be unparalleled, he does, in fact, set up the autobiographer's ideal. It is the complete emergence of a person, drawn from his surrounding darkness in the physical accidents of life. The story should be dynamic, not passive; only so far as it interprets the spirit of a life, with the reactions as well as the circumstances, can it interest and move profoundly. The writers of memoirs and reminiscences are on a different tack from this. Their interest lies, certainly, in what has come their way; but it is centred in these other people and things. The conversational and the decorative are their concern, and to read them is like dining out or visiting a foreign town. Some difference of this kind can

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be noticed in the recent autobiographies of Aksakov and Gorky. Aksakov takes us wandering through ancient country houses, reviving the witchery of old costumes and music, and long, deep-tasted hours of country leisure. Sensitive and graphic as he is, he can restore the life of a truculent personality till it animates an entire book. But that personality is not his own; and he appears as a connoisseur or collector of what is interesting rather than as of great interest in himself. Gorky has kept impressions that are equally vivid, and indeed more so; witness his portraits of "grandfather" and "grandmother" and their respective Deities—the one worshipped with a furious anger of contradiction, the other in the silence of the woods; the little red-haired Cossack who holds everyone entranced with his songs; the whole picture of the chaotic and outrageous life of his town. Far stronger in imagination than Aksakov, no doubt he has dealt pretty freely with his story. But his chief difference from the other is that he has grasped the personal being of himself and his companions in such a way as to give not only an illusion but an interpretation of life.

Just so far as autobiographies distinguish themselves from the externality of memoirs, they come nearer to the intimate journal. One may easily haggle too much over the difference of form, though it has its real importance. Diaries range from the trivial to the purely introspective; they are immediate in any case, and so they contrast

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with an autobiographer's narrative of retrospect. The decisive point is what they have to say. A purely reflective journal like Amiel's is far removed from autobiography; Pepys, on the other hand, must certainly count, for he performs in a kind of automatism the same self-revelation which Rousseau executes with method. All values and impressions come alike to his amazing gusto, nor does he make the least attempt to separate himself from them. And the result is that what would have been trivial in another case becomes here the whole truth, for Pepys has no self outside the thrill of his experiences. Through this chaos of the disconnected and unconscious he appears as an artist in life, and so unique, in his apparent commonplace, that there has been no second Pepys.

There is, however, another nature almost as impressionable, though inwardly tormented, and that is Marie Bashkirtseff, with whom we began. In reading her journal we feel no doubt that it is the whole story of a life. From the time she emerges as a child, transplanted to the Riviera from a dim background in the Ukraine, until she dies at twenty-six in Paris, with her last picture unfinished and fame still outside her grasp, she shows the most astonishing thirst for living. Life is so short, she says (while still early in her teens) and we only have it once. She has, indeed, the "amour universel." "I should like to see everything, have everything . . . I want *it all*, the *rest* is not enough for me." We might read in her omnivorous



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eagerness a secret feeling that she has not long to live. With amusement, misgiving, and compassion we watch this desire affirming itself. At thirteen she prays God to give her the Duc de H——; he is for the moment her symbol of glorious, unapproachable beauty. "Je ne vis qu'en dehors," she says. It seems precocious to the point of parody; but she has already the inner life which her words denied. The long-drawn flirtation with Cardinal Antonelli's nephew shows her finally turning in disgust from something that depreciated her proud, inmost self. Fame is the only true satisfaction; it will give her the passport to all experience, and the highest ecstasy in life. So for fame she toils as a painter, with the strangest mixture of absorption in her work and distraction by every current that ruffles her vanity. She seems on fire with the pure flame of art, and then we turn a page and find that her real desire is—"attraper une médaille, être applaudie, triompher." To the very end the horrid excellence of her rival, Breslau, pursues her with a bitter sting. And long before the end it is clear that her passion for art struggled unequally with her passion for fame.

She must always have been an egoist; yet she has such a zest for excellence, so coolly detached a judgment of whatever was inferior, that had she lived she would have refined her pride and might have shed her vanity. The friendship with Bastien-Lepage, doomed just as she was, brings a new accent into her book. It shows her at another level,

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where there is something inexpressibly touching in her shy, delicate admiration of the friend and master, "the true, the unique Bastien-Lepage." A friend, with perhaps the hint of something more, on her side; "enfin, il y a quelque chose." Life gave her possibilities of which she dreamed and tasted, but she had nothing enduring till she died. Then she secured her fame. No doubt, in spite of the prelude after Rousseau's manner, she would have thought this posthumous celebrity much less valuable than the will-o'-the-wisp which she pursued. Yet as a painter she might have won no more than the reputation of a talent, while her Journal has a breadth and vitality which brings it very near to genius.

The tragic element in this life is provided by its end, which suddenly reveals the deeper irony and contradiction latent in the stuff of comedy. In the only English autobiography which excels it for poignancy, that of Haydon, there is a continuous tragic interest due to the nature of the man. Haydon, as he confesses, found it exhilarating as well as desperate to stand alone against the world. No doubt Elizabeth Barrett was right in her comment that his life was one long agony of self-assertion because he lived on "the *slope* of genius," and could not be steadfast and calm. But he also had from the first that consciousness of a mission which inspired not only his huge strained canvases, but his splendid championship of the Elgin Marbles, and perhaps the most downright assertion of the

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claims of art on the nation that was ever made. Quite consistently with this, Haydon threw himself on Providence, though the prayers with which he opens every attack on a new picture are not simply acquisitive, like Bashkirtseff's, but breathe the spirit of a Cromwellian general urging that his brain and hand may be nerved for victory. They are flushed with self-assertion, as when he prays that his exhibition may "go in one continual stream of triumphant success to the last instant"; or they frankly commit the whole matter to the powers above:

O God! let it not be presumption in calling for Thy blessing on my six works. Let no difficulty on earth stop or impede their progression for one moment.

He chooses the same form for his bitterest confession of failure:

Thank God with all my soul, all my nature, my children have witnessed the harassing agonies under which I have ever painted; and the very name of painting—the very name of High Art—the very thought of a picture gives them a hideous and disgusting taste in their mouths. . . . And I pray God on my knees, with my forehead bent to the earth, and my lips to the dust, that He will, in His mercy, afflict them with every other passion, appetite, or

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misery, with wretchedness, disease, insanity, or gabbling idiotism, rather than a longing for painting—that scorned, miserable art—that greater imposture than the human species it imitates.

These exaltations and despairs are the keynote of a story which scarcely has a rival for the sheer play of accident and colour. It is rich in the portraits of others, from Wordsworth to the Duke of Wellington. But it is a tragedy of action that we recognize in this struggle of a dreamer with the world; even as a tale of debt it eclipses anything in Balzac. Irony is always present; Haydon's public arguments are admitted only to turn, one by one, to his private injury; and his last exhibition is visited by a few stragglers, while Tom Thumb draws thousands to the freak show next door.

Haydon is an exceptionally dramatic type in English autobiography. Its peculiar strength seems to lie elsewhere—in the mental histories, less brilliant of tone, but full of psychological interest, such as Newman and Tyrrell, Mill and Spencer, have produced. Richard Jefferies, in the same way, devotes himself to exhibiting one deep, pervading impulse in "The Story of My Heart." Gibbon is also one of these; his autobiography is really a history of the magnetism of his subject—"my Roman decay," as he affectionately calls it. He writes for his own amusement, but he only claims to interest his readers as giving the image of

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a great historian. Thanks to a lucky accident he has also intrigued us in a way he never contemplated, for among his papers we can surprise an autobiography in process of construction as a work of art. To compare the six drafts he made for it is a high fascination. We see how he only comes back in the last of them to the full, expansive note he struck in the first, and observe delightedly the phrases to which he is constant; how a tear of gratitude always trickles down his cheek at the mention of his aunt, Mrs. Porten, and the captain of the Hampshire Militia does perpetual service to the Roman historian. And the final impression we arrive at is that Gibbon's art was his nature; if it is true, as he says, that "the habits of correct writing" may produce the appearance of more art than was intended, it is also true of him, if of anyone, that style is the image of character, and the flavour of the autobiography lies in its exact confirmation of this remark of his. Without his own story we should scarcely have guessed how much of the power of his style is due to the profoundly concentrated nature behind it.

Gibbon gives us mainly results, but the moderns who have since written the stories of their minds are just as interested in processes. The most complete portrait is Father Tyrrell's, though it only covers part of his life. It goes deeper than Newman's and is much less complacent than Spencer's. In fact for modesty—a rare autobiographic trait—Tyrrell's only rival is Mill; and perhaps in his

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self-depreciation we can trace the workings of a "complex" of inferiority. As an intellectual affair Mill's story is much more extraordinary and important, but Tyrrell's is more human and psychologically more perceptive. It is alive to the changes and illusions of personality. We all know the tacit effort of our friends to persuade us to be what they think we are. It is a steady current of suggestion, from which an autobiographer tries to escape. But Tyrrell sees from the outset that there is a further *idolon*:

Just as a child instinctively plays the part of a soldier or robber, or some other that interests his imagination, so through life we are all subconsciously playing our some rôle or other, we have some theory, some view about ourselves—not always the same necessarily—in the light of which we mentally construct our autobiography.

Tyrrell treats these projected images, like all other mental phenomena, with an entirely selfless detachment. His search for a complete emotional satisfaction never lulls his critical sense asleep. He can write that "it is humiliating to see how everywhere affection has enslaved, or at least for a time fettered, one's free reason; and how little one is capable of pure intellectual honesty." In essentials, it is the conflict between an analytical brain and a nature striving to unify its affections, though this kind of simplification does little justice

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to the rich varieties of his mental history. What makes it attractive is that he combines a strong individuality with an entire indifference to his personal chances.

Sincerity thus detached is rare; yet it is odd to see into what various blends of character detachment enters. It is quite compatible with egoism, as the case of Spencer shows. Even Cellini cynically exhibits it. We can hardly take it as a final test of truth; this must be gauged from the whole spirit of the writer. And the consoling thought to which autobiography seems to lead is that truth of some kind must emerge even from the inveterately deluded. At the worst we shall know that the writer belongs to the deceived or the deceiving. Without the "*Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe*" we could never have guessed the full sumptuousness of the mirage which Chateaubriand wove round his life and destiny. It is plainly a case of the projected ego, but it remains the best document for interpreting the real person.

Art of this kind, where the romantic strain is at its highest, is still faithful to the truth of impressions. It is not as an artist that the autobiographer betrays us, but as a perverse or fallible human being. The calculating liar is rare among the self-delineators; they have felt, as a rule, that candour was the essence of their business. What rather needs insisting on is that only when they treat it with the seriousness of art, and the artist's susceptibility to character and experience, do they produce

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something which is supremely worth having. Then they show that truth and art are one; and we appreciate D. H. Lawrence's saying that the artist, in the act of being an artist, is never an idealist.

On the other side, the best of them are just as far removed from the "slice of life" of haphazard fiction. Manners, customs, all the odd and endearing bits of the antique, are the province of the social annalist. What we ask of the autobiographer is that he shall disclose a personality. The unmistakable flash of this lifts Hudson's "Far Away and Long Ago" above a mere exotic record, however fascinating and beautiful; and the continual exploration of his changing self gives Barbellion a place in the same line as Rousseau. The art of interpreting their own lives is not granted to too many. Where it appears, it fixes something that will stand above the mere flood of reminiscence.